

A VISION OF NIGHT.

BY ALICE MAUD EWELL.

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It was many years ago—though the events described in this story are none the less terribly vivid in my memory because of that—more than twenty years ago, that I found myself, one gloomy autumn evening, a weary pedestrian traveler, out of my way, belated and alone, in a wild and lonely part of the German Rhineland.

I had been loitering away part of the afternoon amid the ruins of Ericsfell Castle, one of the most ancient and extensive in that region, and now found, about sunset, with a dark cloudy night hastening upon me, that I had unaccountably missed my way to the inn that ought to be nestling somewhere hidden among these woods or hills. I tried in vain several roads, that seemed to lead to nothing but scrubby oak-thickets or stretches of waste desolate upland—not even a peasant's-hut in sight. Fruitless was the search—or, rather, houseless—and I at last decided to go back to the castle-ruins and there pass the night.

Ericsfell Castle is an immense stone structure, mocking even in this its last decay the puny efforts of our modern architecture, its huge square towers, vast parapets and outlying walls, broken but still massive gateways, all most fitly crowning the hill whereon it stood.

One side of this hill fell precipitously to the stream below—a wild mountain-torrent racing on to the Rhine, not far off; the other three sides sank away in rocky, jagged, half-wooded terraces to the more level ground, from whence I toiled wearily up by a scarce discernible path and re-entered this not very inviting place of lodgment.

I had noticed, that afternoon, a small chamber—one of the few with walls still intact and a roof overhead—rather high up in a tower at the southwest and most sheltered corner. In that chamber, I now planned to pass the night, as a rainstorm seemed more than probable, and shelter, even of a somewhat depressing, bare, stony kind, was to be desired. So, after some stumbling and some perhaps not very decorous grumbling besides, I got up the narrow stair built in the wall of solid stone masonry and into my night-quarters.

Now, I am not a nervous—nor yet, I flatter myself, a timid—man; I have slept out-of-doors many a time and in some by no means cheerful

houses; yet I own that, when I lighted a match and looked about, I felt a strong impulse to seek some other lodging or tramp around under the open sky all night, in preference to this.

The room was quite small, with low vaulted ceiling and one narrow slit of a window, through which, so thick was the wall, the outside twilight utterly failed to struggle. This window was still iron-barred across, though surely egress or entrance of grown person or child would have been impossible, the bars eaten with red rust yet still in place, as also were the huge iron door-hinges, from which the door had been wrenched—who knows how long before? Just opposite the window was a narrow stone bench, built close to, and indeed into, the wall. Near to this seat was a massive iron ring—rust-eaten, like the window-bars—turning in a staple let into the masonry.

Snug enough in size, high up, and certainly dry; but somehow the air seemed to me heavy, stifling with the dust, the decaying exhalations of dead and gone centuries—death-like as one of those stone coffins of old. The place was the very abode—nay, the petrified stony embodiment—of feudal darkness, cruelty, hard, brutal, narrow ignorance of life's comfort and grace. What tale of captivity, suffering, perhaps lingering death, did that barred window, that cold stone seat, that iron ring, whose use was apparent—what did all this suggest? However, I laughed at these fancies sleep disturbing—or tried to, at any rate—ate a supper of bread and cheese from my traveler's-wallet, smoked two or three cigars, and then, having no light to read by, though I had a tempting "Revue des Deux Mondes" in my pocket, I wrapped my long waterproof cloak around me, and, lying down close under the window, fell fast asleep.

The bed was a hard one; but, being a sound sleeper and now tired out, I slept none the less profoundly for that. Had I dreamed at all, I might have believed what I saw and heard later on to be a continuation of such dreams. But I did not dream; nor was my waking, when it happened, a matter of any doubt. My slumber was broken by a loud, and for this place most astonishing, sound, seemingly just overhead—something like the striking of an immense clock—a slow, harsh, discordant noise, as of the

grating of rusty iron. Wide-awake at the first clang, though doubting its reality, I listened with breathless attention as it went on—two, three, four, five, on to the twelfth stroke—and then, amid strange weird echoes, stopped.

What was it? Could it be? What ancient perpetual machinery, marking yet through centuries of ruin and neglect the time that had swept its makers into oblivion? A bell, a clock, striking the midnight-hour mechanically in this long-deserted place? Impossible! I opened my eyes wide and started up at the thought, and then straightway became conscious of a strange state of things in the chamber: there was a light in the room, all over it—a sort of even shadowless light, not as of dawn coming through the window, nor yet emanating from any visible source within, but a wan, sickly, unnatural glare, such as sometimes precedes great atmospheric danger and tumult; and, by this light, I saw, sitting on the stone bench—saw with a wild sense of unreality, though my eyes never took in more vivid impression—the figure of a man.

It was that of a man of huge frame and perhaps once noble commanding shape, now hideously emaciated and shrunken, as could be seen through a loose and tattered gray garment which he wore, of rude antique fashion and coarsest texture. His hair and beard were black streaked with gray, long and uncombed, hanging in matted wisps; his eyes were deeply sunken, dark, and ghastly; his skin the color of the grave. Around his middle was an iron band or girdle, fastened by a chain to the ring in the wall, in his hands a crucifix held tightly gripped to his breast.

The haggard fearful eyes were staring up and out of the window, right there above me; the bluish lips seemed to move continually; but no hint of my presence being noted did eyes or lips give. There he sat, and there sat I upon the floor as I had started up, for the moment all activity, all emotion suspended in a wondering stupor.

Who was he? How had he come there, during those my sleeping hours? It was impossible, but seemingly true—there he was. And, as I looked upon his face, it seemed impressed on my mind, revealed through the abysmal horror of those eyes, that he was slowly starving to death, and that of his own free will and accord. There was anguish, fear, remorse, a kind of lurid flickering hope, fierce gnawing hunger, all feebly glaring by turns from those deep hollow orbs, but, dominating each and all, an indescribable voluntary resignation.

I looked toward the entrance, open when I went to sleep, blank and black with the gloom

of the descending outside stairway; but there I saw now distinctly a heavy oaken door, studded with huge nails, fast on its iron hinges, and tightly shut as from without.

Good heavens! what was this—reality, nightmare, or something more fearful than either? How had this come about? I am not a superstitious man—or, rather, was not before the time whereof I write—but now the gazing stupor of my first awakening changed to that strange, nature-planted, shuddering fear which causes the hair to rise on one's head and the flesh of one's body to creep.

But I made a tremendous effort to shake off this growing feeling.

"Who are you? And how do you come here?" I asked, in a voice that I meant to be loud and bold; yet, though my lungs gave forth, my lips uttered the words—not a sound reached my ears, or apparently those of the strange figure yonder. I spoke again; I shouted aloud, or at least made the effort as never before; not one whisper broke the vault-like stillness, naught but the feebly-struggling breath of my fellow-inmate.

I started to rise upright, and could not; the lower portion of my body felt impotent, dead; and, when I looked down upon it, it was, to my eyes, invisible. I could see no part of myself. I held my hand, both hands, before my face; they made not the faintest shadowy barrier against this fearful, sourceless, unnatural light. And yet they were still my hands; I felt them—cold, numbed, and as if shrunken in size, but still living, still my own. I was conscious of their motion, but they were none the less invisible to my sight.

Merciful God! what had come over me? What was I—a bodiless identity, a viewless looker-on? Was it at a reflection of some long past or distant future scene, some glimpse out of eternity, lost to common fleshly sight amid ages of intervening time and change? Was my life-thread—immortal, without beginning as without end, as some philosophy has taught—ever interwoven, would it ever be, with that of this man or semblance of a man before me? Or was I merely an accident, a chance intruder into this another sphere? Had my spirit left the body by that strange transition called death? And, if so, where was its freedom, and where the deserted relics of mortality?

With these questions, the ghostly fear departed from me—my first wonder returned, only deeper, more solemn. I held still, the only thing possible in my strange case, and waited for what should come next.

I held still—my very heart, perhaps—for I heard not its beating, even in that deathly silence. I waited, heaven knows how many seconds, minutes, hours—till, as in fever-sickness or sleepless morbid unrest, the sense of tumult—tremendous, convulsive, even amid recognized utter silence—fell upon me. It was the ghost of echo, appealing at first to hearing finer than the flesh-and-blood ear: the weird wraiths of sounds—embodying presently into the audible, far-distant, yet approaching cries, blood-curdling demoniacal groans, laughter, curses—coming louder, nearer, up the stairway outside to the very door.

Then, looking at the chained man upon the bench, I saw that the mingled fear of his expression asserted itself, deepened, grew into abject terror, horrified despair. The crucifix shook in his hands; the lips, before inaudibly muttering, I could hear shaping now, in agonized repetition: “Mercy! mercy! mercy!” as the door swung slowly open, without sound of lock or bolt withdrawn, and a woman’s form appeared, advanced, stood before him.

Never had I looked on such marvelous, such superhuman, beauty; such beauty of form and feature, such blended grandeur and perfection of womanly development. But it was the beauty of a fallen angel, the queenliness as of the very queen of hell. It was the evil fascination of a Messalina or a Jezebel.

I noted the strange deadly color of her skin, the greenish livid hue of oval cheek and swelling throat, suggestive of incipient decay.

This I saw; and also behind her—good heavens! was it not through her, too, that I looked? I saw also strange fearful shapes, darkly vague, yet of goblin hideousness, apparent enough to haunt a lifetime—a ghastly retinue, attendant, tormenting. And each right hand was uplifted, each holding in its grasp a scourge. On that shapely back were marks of their use. Cut and seamed it was, and the blood—oh, horror of horrors! Was it blood, red, human, life-feeding, that dripped so blackly down? Was that thin dark fluid blood, or was it not rather indeed the very essence, the poisonous ichor, of corruption?

Somewhere once, when I was a boy, I had seen a picture, one of the early Christian martyrs so half-naked, driven, scourged through the streets of Rome. But on the saint’s face were fortitude, resignation—aye, even hope and gladness; on this, the despair, the loathing horror of the damned.

The figure on the bench shrank, cowered back against the wall behind, his lank hair bristling

on his head, his hands still clutching the crucifix upraised to shut out the sight. “Sorceress, fiend!” he moaned. “Avaunt, thou spectre of hell! Thou canst not hurt me! Thou art dead these twenty years! I saw thee die. I heard thy latest groan. Thou hast gone to dust and ashes, I tell thee. Get thee away, shade from the pit! I have made my peace with heaven.”

The other laughed, a low blood-curdling laugh, echoed weirdly from that grisly shadow-throng within the doorway: and, looking thence, I saw the grin of hideous goblin fangs, the waving of long knotty arms, as in gleeful anticipation. The woman raised her hands, which, I now perceived, were tied together around the wrists with a snake-like thong, and pointed toward the cowering wretch.

“Vengeance!” she cried aloud, in a tone I can never think of without a shudder. “Vengeance! I, Hildegunda, call down upon the head of Wolfgarn of Ericsfell. False traitor to friendship and love! robber of shrines! betrayer of innocence! liar, murderer! thy time is come. Vengeance upon thee! It is twenty years, this night, that have I wandered, unresting, tormented: my body dead, yet alive to gnawing pain, scourge-torn without, conscience-lashed within, for my sin and thine. Come, for our demon-guests await thee, our bridal-feast is spread.”

“No, no, no!” was the gasping cry, in answer. “Jesu Maria! Let them away, and thou likewise begone. I had repented, confessed, fasted, won the shrift. Hell cannot touch me, with all its accursed mocking shapes. I have paid my price for heaven. Houses and lands, honors and pleasures have I given—aye, even my life, by hunger’s gnawing tooth well-nigh ended. I have repented, with priestly counsel, with candle, book, and bell, and beads duly told. Demons, avaunt! Miserere Domine!”

“Repented! Thou hast repented!” cried the woman—or the thing that had been a woman—with another horrible mirthless laugh. “Didst thou ever give thy victims time for one prayer? Had I time or warning when thy dagger sent me straight to this fearful doom? Furies, behold your prey—the bridegroom ready for our marriage-revel!”

All my ghostly fear, my shuddering horror, had merged ere this into wonder—a wondering awe that stayed my heart-beats, froze my blood, dulled my sight and hearing. I felt the growing sense of unconsciousness and struggled against it, as I saw less and less clearly—though all too horribly distinct, nevertheless—the hideous response to Hildegunda’s command, the gleeful

gnashing of demon-fangs, the waving of weird hands aloft. I heard the yell of fiendish triumph, the shrill menacing demoniac laughter; saw the chained wretch, Wolfgarn of Ericsfell, overcome by fear at last realized, fling down the crucifix—writhing, screaming, tugging at the chain.

I saw them close around him; I saw, or thought I saw, the fierce seizure, the quivering anguish of limb torn from limb, and then sudden abysmal darkness, silence, as I fell on my face in a swoon.

It was broad daylight, and the sun was shining in through the slit window in one bright-yellow streak full on the bench—empty of human shape, dust-covered, as I had last seen it in sober waking moments. There were the open doorway, the iron ring, the rust-eaten window-bars—all as before. And there was I myself, feeling as if aroused from a deep exhausted sleep, my brain dully throbbing, my body sore and heavy, my eyes still tortured with that hideously-recurring scene of the night-watches.

Was it a dream—one of the many which nightly beckon our souls from fleshly limits across the invisible bounds of that world between earth and heaven and hell? Was it, after all, only this? But no: it was too vivid, too luridly burned into my memory, too fearfully distinct, for any dream.

I felt then what is still my conviction: that I had been looking on the ghastly expiatory repetition of some long-buried, forgotten-by-men, yet ever-living crime, casting its shadow still behind athwart the yearly-recurring season of its earthly chance.

Even now, in morning light and sunshine, I felt a strange horror and fear of this place, and yet withal a fascination that kept me wandering, searching, about the ruins for more than an hour. But nothing did I find to throw light on that mystery—on Wolfgarn of Ericsfell or Hildegunda the Fair: by him loved and murdered—no trace of that bell that had clang'd midnight upon my broken slumber.

Ruinous, desolate, silence over all—open to sun and wind, to creeping and flying things, the unresponsive stones bore no inscriptions, told naught to questioning eye or ear of what they might once have witnessed.

Sometime later in the day, when I had found the missing inn, about a mile or so from the castle, and, eating my much-needed breakfast there, told the portly garrulous landlord where I had spent the night and the singular dream, as I chose to call it, which I had had—when I told all this, he looked grave.

"Ach Gott!" he said; it was a dismal place and dreams were curious things. Now, that dream reminded him of something he had heard about that very old owls'-den up yonder.

He had never read it in a book: it was just one of the castle-echoes, so to speak, and had come down from father to son, goodness knew how many hundred years. It told how, in the old, old times, one of the Barons of Ericsfell—lords of the castle—had been a fearfully bad man, a very incarnation of pride, lust, and cruelty: to repent even more fearfully at last. For he shut himself up in a room of his castle, resolved upon a death by starvation, thus giving his body to mortal torment, and hoping to free thereby his soul.

"It wouldn't suit my mind, that sort of end," chuckled the fat landlord, slyly; and went on to tell how—as the legend went—there were heard, one midnight, a great clamor and screeching, the most unearthly noise, in that room; and, when at last the terrified menials went in, against their lord's aforegiv'n stern command, they found him not there, nor any trace of him, alive or dead, forever after. The fiend had claimed his own, men said, in spite of that tardy repentance, that hideous expiation.

'Twas also said that, one night in the year, there was a sound as of a great bell clang'd the stroke of midnight; only the sound, for no bell was in the castle, nor had been for generations. His grandfather had once heard this sound, and he said it made his blood run cold. What! I had heard it too? Blessed Mary! it was a strange thing. I might thank my stars that I had come out of that devil-baunted place alive and with my senses.

He crossed himself, muttering a prayer; while, as for me, listening with a shiver to this old, old tale, I did thank God that I had come off with reason unwarped by the sights and sounds that tried it so sorely, this night, in the castle of Ericsfell.

A WIND OF FATE.

BY GEORGIA GRANT.

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WHEN mamma and I decided to summer at Greylock, a quiet little seaport on the New-England coast, of course Fred Lingard made arrangements to spend his vacation there also. For Fred and I were engaged—at least, we were as much engaged as I would consent to be; I said we were "half engaged," which always made mamma very indignant.

"Nobody ever heard of such a thing," was her displeased answer to all such statements on my part.

But I didn't care if it was unheard of. When people were really engaged, they began to think about getting married, which I never did. I was in no hurry to marry Fred or anybody else—I liked my freedom too well.

Fred himself took our engagement seriously enough, at least as seriously as it was in his nature to take anything, for he was about as harum-scarum as I—and mamma could tell you how bad that was, if you were to ask her. I think, between us, we were somewhat of a trial to dignified, sober, proper mamma—full of anxiety as to the proprieties, which never troubled me. Of the two, she minded Fred less. For one thing, he was a man, and many things were allowable for him that I could not do, as mamma often reminded me. Besides, she forgave Fred a good deal because of his devotion to me, for he really was devoted—at least, as much as I would allow him to be. Too much attention from one person, however agreeable, always bored me.

So when Fred, on being told of our plans, announced his intention of coming to Greylock in August, when his vacation began, I frowned and said rather pettishly:

"Why don't you go somewhere else, where you can see new people? You must be tired of the sight of me. And Greylock is a very stupid place, besides."

Whereat mamma looked very much shocked; but Fred only laughed.

"Perhaps you are tired of the sight of me," he suggested, amiably. "Why do you go there if it is stupid?"

"Oh—because I am tired of the rush and excitement of fashionable summer-resorts, which you never seem to be. I want to go where it is quiet and solitary, where I shall meet nobody I know."

"How can you be sure that I am not tired too? I need rest as well as you," he continued, quite unruffled. "Of course, if you don't want me to go, I won't," he concluded, looking so nearly hurt that I relented and accorded him my gracious permission.

Mamma and I left the city early in June. We had engaged rooms with a widow "who had seen better days." We had been recommended to her by an acquaintance, to whom she was a distant relation. Mrs. McClure lived in a little cottage down by the sea, taking one or two lodgers during the summer in order to eke out her scanty income. Unexceptionable references being one of her requirements, we were very glad that she consented to accommodate us.

Greylock owned one small hotel and a few boarding-houses; but it was, as I have said, very quiet. The sea-air and the rest, however, were just what I needed, and they soon brought back the color and flesh of which the winter's dissipations had deprived me.

It was not a very large place, but it boasted a small aristocracy, of which the minister and the doctor were the chief lights. Beside the floating population in summer, the regular inhabitants were mostly the fishermen and their families.

One day, in the course of some neighborhood gossip with my landlady, I happened to mention Dr. Risley's name, and I remarked that I had never met him. "I have had the pleasure of seeing your minister, and he is a dear old man," I added.

"The doctor's not old, miss—not much more than thirty," said Mrs. McClure, picking up the sock she was knitting, and clicking her needles as she talked. "But he's a character for you," she continued. "His sister ain't very young; she lives with him—she and Miss Grace. That big stone house on the hill is theirs. He has money, they say; but he seems to have settled down here for good. He tends all the poor folks round for nothing, and it's to be said they all adore him."

"Who is 'Miss Grace'?" I asked, a question now and then being all that was necessary to stimulate the old lady's unceasing flow of garrulity.

"She's his ward," was the prompt reply;

"and a pretty girl she is, too. He thinks a sight of her, and she of him. I suppose they'll get married, after awhile."

This seeming to be the natural conclusion of the matter, I was not inclined to doubt it; and, presently, the subject was dropped.

Not long after this, I walked down to one of the fishermen's cottages, where a little girl lived who was ill. I had become interested in her, and was anxious to know how she was. I knocked at the door, and it was opened by a ruddy-looking, rather grave-faced man of thirty or thereabout. I felt sure that he was the doctor, and so he proved to be.

In the absence of her mother, the little invalid introduced us, and we talked quite unconstrainedly. There was a naive simplicity about the doctor that delighted me—it was so novel. He never looked at me to see whether I was handsome, and there was no flattery, either conscious or unconscious, in his manner. Accustomed as I am to it in society, its absence was rather refreshing than otherwise to me.

We met several times, after this, in the same way, and made acquaintance with each other rapidly. We were both of us much interested in little Bessie, and this helped to break the ice very quickly.

One day, on my return from a long walk, mamma met me with the announcement that there had been visitors.

"Miss Risley, the doctor's sister, and his ward, Miss Kimball, have just gone."

I felt somewhat disappointed, as I was slightly curious to see the doctor's family—particularly the younger lady, in whom he was supposed to be interested.

"Miss Risley is plain and not particularly attractive," continued mamma, "but Miss Kimball is very pretty and agreeable. They were sorry that you were not at home; but I promised them that we would return their visit soon."

Accordingly, in the course of the week, we called at the stone house on the hill. It was a queer rambling old-fashioned dwelling. Somehow, it reminded me of the doctor himself.

The ladies answered to mamma's description; but the elder was sufficiently like her brother to impress me pleasantly. Miss Kimball was about eighteen; a graceful blonde, with delightfully ingenuous ways. I was pleased with her at once.

After we had talked for a few minutes, the door opened and the doctor appeared, looking rather abstracted; but I decided that his manners were charming—the height of simplicity.

"What an oddity!" remarked mamma to me,

afterward. But he impressed me, as usual, as an agreeable one.

Presently, he asked me whether I would like to see his collection.

Now, I have but one hobby—natural history—so I accepted the doctor's proposition with alacrity! Mamma declined going, so we two—Grace, as I learned later to call her, and I—went into the back parlor.

When I saw the result of the doctor's investigations, I concluded that I had discovered the reason for his burying himself and his unusual talents in this quiet place. He wanted time for research.

"Look at all these horrid things he wastes his leisure over," said Miss Kimball, smiling mischievously at her guardian, bending lovingly over his treasures.

He did not seem at all disturbed by her railing. That he was both fond and proud of his ward was very evident. There certainly seemed to be a good understanding between them.

Our acquaintance with the Risleys ripened rapidly into friendship. They were almost the only persons in Greylock for whom I cared. The summer boarders were too much like inferior imitations of the people I had left behind in town, and the regular inhabitants were not of the intellectual order—generally speaking, at least.

Miss Risley improved so much on acquaintance that mamma and she formed quite an intimacy. I had become very fond of Grace, and, as for the doctor, he and I were fast friends. He interested me because he was so unlike the society-men with whom I was acquainted. He was what neither Fred Lingard nor any of them was—thoroughly in earnest. We met very often in the course of my visits to Bessie Lane, who was still an invalid. We even reached the stage of friendship when I ventured to rally him on being willing to remain in obscurity; but I did not make much impression.

It was August now, and Fred would soon arrive, whereat mamma was greatly delighted—more so than I, I'm afraid. I did not feel as enthusiastic, perhaps, as I might have or as mamma thought I should.

Walking along the cliffs, I met the doctor returning from some visits. It was the day I had just received Fred's letter announcing his coming. We began talking, and I remarked carelessly:

"We expect a friend here, shortly. I don't know whether you have heard me speak of him—Mr. Lingard."

"No," replied the doctor, giving me one of his calm scrutinizing glances which seemed to read my very soul.

I felt as if it would be impossible to hide anything from him, even if one tried. I felt sure that he divined at once how matters stood with Fred and me, and of course I blushed a little, just because I did not wish to. He began to talk of something else, however; and, in five minutes, I had forgotten all about the matter. When the doctor talked, one forgot everything except what he was saying—at least, if one had sense enough to appreciate him.

Toward nightfall, the next day, a terrible storm broke. We learned that there was a ship tossing in the tempest, just outside the harbor. Very much excited by the idea, I insisted on being a witness of the sight. Mamma yielded a reluctant consent; and, well wrapped up in waterproof cloak and shoes, I accompanied Jennie, the stout serving-maid, to the cliffs, where a thrilling scene presented itself.

The waves rose high and the wind drove the ship wildly about. The lighthouse-keeper and all the men were there, getting out the boats. Foremost among them, leading and invigorating, was the doctor's tall figure. I now saw him in a new light—not a student or naturalist, but a leader of men: bold, fearless, and athletic.

Catching sight of me, he gave me a reassuring glance, even a smile, and, coming toward me, said:

"I do not think the danger is very great."

"Shall you venture out?" I asked, anxiously. The sea looked awful to my unaccustomed eyes.

"I do not think there will be any need," he answered. "These men are more skillful with the oars than I. All they need is a head to direct them—there are hands enough."

The doctor was right. Everybody on board the ship was saved, and even the vessel itself was found, next morning, to be less damaged than had been feared. But I had gained a new respect for my friend.

The following day dawned clear and beautiful. Fred was expected to arrive; so mamma, Grace, and I walked down to the little station, to meet him. Grace looked unusually pretty, and I told her so. She blushed very charmingly. I sang praises of the doctor's conduct the night before, and that delighted her, I could see.

Just as we reached the station, the train rushed rapidly in, stopping long enough to give a well-known figure time to alight; and, in a moment, Fred was holding mamma and me each by the hand, giving Grace a sidelong glance. Disengaging my hand, I introduced them, and

we chatted gayly as we walked toward home. Fred was in the best of spirits, but he looked very young and boyish to me.

His arrival made the "partie-carrée" complete, as it did not disturb our intimacy. Fred is a sensible youth, on the whole, and he liked the doctor at once. We had a great deal of fun and enjoyment in the days that followed. The doctor seemed to have dropped his grave student's-mantle and to have grown quite boyish. I liked Grace better, the more I understood the sweetness of her disposition.

August melted almost imperceptibly into September. Soon, it would be time to return home. Fred must go back, he said, by the end of September; so we about decided that we would accompany him.

One morning, toward the close of our last week, I wakened with a violent headache.

"I was going to propose a row," said Fred, at the breakfast-table.

"You will have to dispense with my society, then," I answered. "But the rest of you can go."

At first, he protested, offered his services to me; but I declined them.

"I am going to my own room," I said—I am afraid, a little irritably—"to lie down." And I went.

I fell asleep, and, about two hours later, awoke, feeling somewhat better. I fancied that the fresh air would do me good; so, arraying myself in a bright-scarlet jacket, for the weather was cool, I started for a walk. I sauntered toward the boat-landing, wondering whether the others had gone rowing. If so, I should probably meet them on their return. A fresh breeze blew so strongly, that it almost cured my headache. I buttoned my jacket up close and walked briskly on.

Suddenly, my name was spoken in a cheerful tone:

"Miss Grafton!"

Looking up, I saw the doctor.

"Good-morning," I said. Then: "Have you seen anything of the others?"

"No. I have been busy all morning," was the reply. "I have been rather idle of late," he continued, smiling.

"Let us walk down to the boat-landing," I suggested. "Fred wanted to take a row; perhaps he and Grace have gone. I had such a headache, that I had to lie down."

The doctor looked keenly into my face as I spoke, and of course I blushed slightly. I was not in the least troubled about Fred. He might go rowing with all the young women in Christen-

dom—I did not feel afraid. We talked about other things until we reached the stone steps that led down to where the boats were fastened. They belonged to the doctor, and this was his land we were on. As we walked along, he looked rather abstracted. I wondered whether he liked the idea of Grace's going out with Fred alone. I felt like reassuring him, but I did not dare.

We stood at the top of the terrace, surrounded by old trees, one of which overhung the balustrade, almost brushing my hat with its leaves. We looked out across the sea.

Just a little distance above, the land jutted out into a point, on which the lighthouse stood. Inside this sheltered spot, the water was perfectly calm near the shore, but, farther out, a sudden gale had ruffled the waves into rough, white-capped, angry surges. The sky was banked up with heavy gray clouds, that threatened a storm. It hardly seemed safe to be away from shore in a rowboat.

Tossed on the highest billows, almost out of sight, was a tiny speck. Could it be their boat? Looking down, we saw that one was missing—a mere cockleshell. I glanced at the doctor. His face was grave, even anxious.

"You are alarmed?" But he was looking eagerly out at the troubled waters beyond the point.

"I am going to take one of those stronger boats and go after them," he said, abruptly.

"Is there danger?" I went on, anxiously.

"A little," was the reply, "in that frail boat. I cannot imagine what possessed Mr. Lingard to take it."

My heart sank within me. I hadn't much confidence in Fred's skill.

"But you will be risking three lives instead of two," I continued, hurriedly.

He smiled.

"No, I can manage a boat better than Mr. Lingard, and I shall take one that is stronger." As he spoke, he sprang down the steps, into the skiff, and, in a moment, was pulling with long steady strokes, out toward the other boat.

The waves beat against the little craft, but he seemed to control it perfectly. The keen wind still blew, but I felt as if I should suffocate. I unfastened my jacket at the throat, and pushed it back. As I leaned eagerly forward, I pressed my hand against my heart to stop its violent beating.

Now he has reached the little boat. I shut my eyes. When I opened them, I uttered an exclamation "Thank God!"—they were safe in the larger one. As they came nearer, I could

see that Fred was exhausted by his struggles with the elements. The doctor was rowing with all his might and main. Would his strength fail before he reached the shore? Would the winds and waves overwhelm them?

Nearer and nearer they were coming. Almost I held my breath. They were close to the shore—they had reached it—in an instant, the doctor had sprung out—then my heart gave one gasp of relief—and then I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes, I was lying on the bed in my darkened room; mamma sitting by me, holding my hand. Gradually memory and thought returned to me.

"Are they all safe?" I gasped.

"Yes, yes—all safe," was mamma's assurance, as she bent solicitously over me.

Then I sank back on my pillows and closed my eyes for a moment. As my mind grew clearer, I realized what that short hour of peril had showed me in all its terrible vividness—what, but for that test of danger, I might never have known. But could the knowledge bring me anything but misery?

"Would you like to see Fred?" mamma was asking me.

"No," I answered, wearily; "I don't want to see anybody—I feel too tired."

Somehow I shrank from facing them all again. What had I said or done in that time of danger? Anything to reveal my secret—the secret that I had never guessed before?

"Nobody was hurt, thank heaven," mamma was saying, "not even the good doctor."

"Nobody?" I closed my eyes and turned my face to the wall. Mamma left me, hoping I would sleep; but I felt in no mood for that. Yet, sooner or later, I must dress and go downstairs. How I longed to put it off—to postpone meeting them all; but what was the use?

So I rose, dressed, and presented myself at the tea-table, looking a little ghost-like. Fred seemed glad to see me, though he only took my hand and pressed it. He was a trifle pale, but he looked very bright.

After some conversation on indifferent subjects, mamma turned to me and said:

"You won't be able to go, the day after to-morrow, will you?"

"Indeed I shall," I answered, quickly. "I should like to get away from this place as soon as possible." I felt that my tone was almost peevish.

Mamma looked at me sympathizingly. As if she could guess why I was so anxious to leave!

I was sitting on the porch, in the soft Septem-

ber sunshine, the next morning. Fred had gone to the post-office. I had a book in my lap, but I was not looking at it. I did not try to read. My thoughts wandered back over the past summer, a strange mingling of bitter and sweet.

Hearing my name spoken in a familiar voice, I looked up and saw the doctor smiling down at me in his usual way. He shook my hand.

"Grace sent me to bring you over," he said. "Put on your shawl and come."

Slowly, unwillingly, I obeyed, and we walked leisurely along the cliffs.

"So you are going away to-morrow?" he said, after awhile.

"Yes," I answered, languidly.

As I saw the calm smiling sea, I shivered a little, thinking of the harm it might do. We were some distance from the boat-landing; and I felt that it was incumbent on me to speak of his bravery yesterday, but I did not want to.

At last I forced myself to say, not without an effort:

"You were very brave yesterday."

He smiled and answered: "Oh! it was nothing! I would have done much more for you, had it been necessary." He said it quite as a matter of course.

"For me?" I ejaculated. "I don't understand!"

"Have you no interest in Mr. Lingard—no special interest?" he asked, slowly, looking straight at me.

"Oh, yes—we are old friends," I answered.

"Nothing more?" he persisted, very gently. I felt myself growing angry. My eyes fell, and the hot color crept into my cheeks.

At last I broke the silence and said softly: "You had someone in the boat in whom you were interested, too."

"You mean—Grace."

I did not look at him as I answered: "Yes."

"You are right," he went on, gravely. "I am very fond of Grace, and she is very fond of me."

"I am very glad," I answered, wearily. "You deserve each other, and I am sure you ought to be happy."

"Yes, we ought to be, unless we wanted something else that we could not get."

"People want a great many things that they can't always have," I said, rather sharply. "They may as well make up their minds to do without them."

"That is true," he assented, gravely. I began to think either his brain or mine must be softening.

"I suppose you did not care about my fate in those moments of suspense?" he asked, abruptly.

I felt his earnest gaze, but I did not dare face it.

"Certainly I cared," trying to make my voice sound unconcerned. "We are friends!"

"Surely!" Even Fred could not object to that!

"Nor Grace!" I could not resist saying; though I knew my voice was unsteady.

"Nor Grace!" he echoed. "But if they did care?" he added.

I looked at him in speechless astonishment.

Just at that moment, we rounded a curve in the shore, a sheltered sequestered spot, and saw two figures standing close together—Fred and Grace. He was holding her hand and looking down into her eyes as only a lover can look.

I stood perfectly still in silent amazement.

"I don't think they would care very much," whispered the doctor. "It looks to me as if we had been jilted."

"I am so glad!" escaped my lips, just audibly.

"Does that mean that you don't care for Fred, and do care for me?" he half whispered.

I did not answer, but he knew what I meant just the same.

"It was that hour of danger that told us all the truth," the doctor explained to me later.

"When I reached the little boat, I found Grace clinging to Fred as she never clung to me—and, when I reached the shore, you just stretched out your hands to me and spoke my name. Then we all knew."

"Blessed gale!" I answered, looking into his happy eyes. "Our lives might have all been wrecked, had it not been for that fortunate WIND OF FATE."

ACROSS THE YEARS.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

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ACROSS THE YEARS.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

A YELLOW glory bathes the whole landscape. Every object is so completely permeated thereby, drowned therein, that even the twin cypresses, which keep guard down by the gates, look more like golden fountains than their ordinary solemn selves. It is Florence at her best.

Fields and woods quiver with an amber radiance. The stretch of highway is a band of dazzling light. The river in the mid distance is a halo. Miles beyond, appears a sweep of burnished roofs and glittering walls, with Giotto's tower and the vast dome of the cathedral rising in the centre; while on the height above, San Miniato's church seems floating in space, glorified, transfigured.

The great villa is still as an enchanted palace. The silence would be oppressive, were it not for the chime of the fountain in the court; and that resembles rather the echo of silver bells, ringing somewhere up in heaven, than any earthly sound. The very cicadas are dumb. The nightingales, that live in the wood at the back of the house, are voiceless, though as a rule they sing all day amid its twilight; but the glory has flooded even those shadowy recesses, hushed the nightingales, and astonished the faun, who watches there in his cold, white marble, with his finger on his laughing lips.

The ground floor of the villa is almost entirely given up to a vast entrance-hall, that is paved and lined with spotless marble, and adorned by marvellous frescoes that Filippino Lippi painted; a stately range of bluish-gray pillars on either side, giving the place a solemn, temple-like appearance, which is increased by statues of antique gods, whose stone semblances, carved by inspired hands, are left to us as memorials of a faith which the world has outgrown and forsaken.

The bronze doors are ajar. The gates of the court-yard are set wide, and frame in the picture of plain and river, and San Miniato's hill. Elinor Dane sits where she can look out across the landscape—sits motionless as the gods in their niches, or as if she were the priestess of the temple which they guard; sits and dreams, with open eyes, seeing the beauty and the present scene, yet engrossed by a vision more real than aught about. The old home across the seas—the old life—the old hopes and aims—ay, the old love, and its happiness, and the bitter pain—they have all come up and hold her fast in their thrall!

She is not given to such weakness, poet though she be. The sternest offspring of Common-sense and Common-place, who ever despised poetry, could not more carelessly ignore such visionary folly than it is her habit to do.

She has everything this world can give, except the one thing, which could make her gifts worth possession. She is so beautiful, that many a man has made a pilgrimage to Dante's city, just to drive himself mad by the sight of that loveliness, which he had again and again sworn to his soul he would avoid forever. She is so famous, that fanciful young people, bringing their enthusiasm to be heightened by the Italian air, stray out to look at the house where she lives, with the same tender awe which stirs their souls when they gaze at the ancient palace, which is sanctified by the memory of England's greatest woman. She is so rich that society—that blindest, stupidest, most superstitious devotee—is eager to put its neck under her foot, and grins a ghastly smile, through its paint, in abject effort to ingratiate itself in her favor. She proves a very unsatisfactory deity. Society has difficulty to win so much as a glance, in answer to its prayers; but it is all the more devout, for that very reason. To be sure, it solaces itself for her indifference by gossip and scandal; but these do not interfere with its worship, any more than the habit, which the Neapolitans have of occasionally spattering Saint Januarius's statue with mud, weakens their cult for the priestly martyr.

All this Elinor Dane possesses, and yet is not happy. Many people would say that, having so much, she ought to be content; but all her beauty, her fame, her riches, only render the real want more apparent, just as a stained carpet would look still uglier in a gorgeously furnished room, than in a meagre chamber, or a weed more unsightly in a garden of beautiful flowers, than in a bare, arid field. Ah! she lacks something to fill her heart. Only love can do that, though we try all sorts of makeshifts to supply its place, from pleasure to duty, according to our natural tastes, or the necessities of our lives. But the pain and dreariness are not banished by either. Our eyes see them all the while, whether we feast with epicureans, or watch by the sick and needy; there they are to haunt us, like skeletons showing through the veil, under which we have tried to conceal their grim awfulness.

What set Elinor dreaming of those old memories, from which, as a rule, she keeps her gaze so carefully averted? Ah, yes, she knows now! She has roused herself for an instant from her reverie to recall its cause.

This morning she drove into Florence, and went to the Pitti Gallery, to spend an hour with her pictures. In the great room, where St. Mark sits wrapped in prophetic vision, while Del Sarto's Lucrezia watches him with a scornful smile on her cold, beautiful mouth, and the Women at the Sepulchre stand unconscious of both, Elinor came suddenly upon two young people straying about—two strangers—so occupied with each other, that they neither noticed her, nor the marvels they had come to study. Such a youthful, blest couple, wrapped in the opening loveliness of their bewildering dream, one needed only to glance in their faces to be sure of that! Their hearts had just spoken; there was neither earth, nor past, nor future visible to them; just heaven and they alone therein!

She watched them, at first with a sort of pleasure, then with pity, then pain. Then she took herself and her suffering away. It seemed wrong to let so black a shadow hover near their elysium, unconscious as they were of its presence.

She had seen enough, for one morning, ay! too much. So she returned sadly to her empty home; and for hours she has been seated in the entrance to her silent dwelling, gazing out upon the lovely scene, that has only made a background, against which the events of her past life have trooped slowly by, in weird, ghostly procession.

She sees the phantom of her childhood—the shy, morbid, visionary little creature, that lived like an alien beside her own father's hearth, as misplaced and unappreciated as a song-bird, dropped by accident in the nest of a family of chattering daws. Had there been any possibility of the father's ever attaching himself to this odd fledgling, the step-mother stands between and prevents it; she hated Elinor's mother, and she hates the dead woman's child, all the more because she is childless herself. Unnatural as it sounds, the one pleasant memory of those early days is connected with her father's death bed. During his final illness, he will have her beside him; partially wandering in his mind, as he is, he knows her; knows her even when he does not recognize the wretched wife, who, whatever her faults, at least loved him with the full passion of her fierce, untamed nature. She cannot come between them now; she has to stand aloof, and unheeded; "Amy's little one" is all the world to him; his last glance for her; his last words the utterance of her name.

After his death, life becomes somewhat more gracious to the child. Human nature is so full of inexplicable contradictions, that it would be idle to wonder how it could be so, but once a widow, the step-mother remembers that Elinor is the daughter of the man she adored, and the child possesses a certain attraction for her, though all the while she cannot forgive her for being "Amy's little one." But whether in a mood to love or hate, she torments her charge always, and is most exacting and unreasonable when a spasm of remorseful tenderness seizes her.

So childhood drifts on. When Elinor is eleven, Herbert North comes into her life, and from that time, its whole course changes—brave, handsome Herbert, five years older than herself, and so able to be her guide and counsellor as well as her friend. He and his half-brother, Leonard Dane, are relatives of Elinor's step-mother, and circumstances cause them to take up their residence in the neighborhood; but Leonard is already a dashing young man, who has no thoughts to waste upon children.

As she grows a little older, Elinor learns, in her fanciful way, to compare the effect of Herbert's companionship upon her existence to that of the sun upon a landscape hidden in mist. Whether against her own morbid temperament, or her step-mother's injustice, he is always Elinor's faithful ally; and the child's heart and soul develop and push on towards blossoming, like a flower that has been brought from darkness, and placed in the June light.

Such happy years follow! Even when Herbert's collegiate terms begin, there is no break; for they live so near the university town, that the pair meet daily. She positively owes her education to him, rather than to the governess whom Mrs. Seymour is shamed into employing; an expenditure which she finds it hard to pardon Elinor, as she grows parsimonious with the years.

But when the girl is sixteen, a change comes. A distant relative dies, and bequeathes Elinor a great fortune; and as the guardian appointed is a kind, sensible man, and well acquainted with Mrs. Seymour's peculiarities, he takes good care that Elinor's home shall be made a very different place from what it had been, while comforts and luxuries depended on her step-mother's whims.

And now her seventeenth birthday rises. Ah, that day! How she had looked forward to it; for it is to witness Herbert's return, after an absence of several weeks. It is the only time a separation has disturbed their peace, since the period when he first brought sunshine across her

solitary path. Herbert is twenty-two now, a man in every sense of the word, firm and self-reliant, youthful as he is. And he had found a sudden need of all these qualities, for a blow had just fallen, which must change all his hopes and aims, as completely as if his past had been a dream.

His fortune had been in the keeping of an uncle, a rich and noted philanthropist, who had followed in the footsteps of so many of the prominent philanthropists of our day—employed charity and religion as a shield for villainy, and when he had ruined himself and his victims, put the crowning stroke to his wickedness by that most cowardly of crimes—suicide.

This is the tidings which Herbert brings, telling his story calmly, and Elinor listens, mute and frightened. His plans are already formed; he has obtained an opening in Australia, and he is going there, to follow up his flight with fortune; going at once; no merciful delay can be granted; on the morrow he must take his departure.

Elinor is brave enough, but her courage yields now.

"Herbert!" she cries, "Herbert!"

The despairing wail, in which her bursting heart finds utterance, causes him to forget all his wise resolutions, his determination to depart, and leave his secret unspoken. He folds her in his arms, and pours out the story, which sounds at once now and yet familiar—slight marvel since they have been living it for years!

"And you must go—you must?" she asks, at last. "Why I, at least, am rich—we had forgotten that—why should you leave me, Herbert?"

But that is impossible. She realizes that he is right, after he explains to her that they are too young to marry; that for him, at his age, to settle down, and live upon her fortune, would be a disgrace; no, he must go; and she must prove her true, brave self, and help his strength with her own.

Mrs. Seymour enters suddenly, and finds Elinor weeping in Herbert's embrace, and has difficulty to hide her angry astonishment.

"Margaret," cries Elinor, calling her stepmother, according to habit, by her Christian name, "he is going away—Herbert is going—he is ruined!"

Then the dismal tale is told, and Margaret listens, concealing her satisfaction under a very pretty pretence of sympathy. She is content with anything that separates the young pair, and in her wisdom she receives, with apparent approval, the news of their engagement, and promises Herbert to take tender care of his treasure, till he

can come back and claim her. Three years hence is the time they set—three years!

The day passes. The morrow comes. Margaret is very kind. She accompanies Elinor to the great city, so that the girl may see Herbert up to the moment of his sailing. Oh, that parting! It is over—Herbert is gone—and when Elinor awakens from her swoon, she is in the carriage driving homeward; Margaret's arms are about her; Margaret's voice is whispering comfort and hope; and all the while Margaret's crafty mind is forming the plot which shall make this parting eternal, so far as the word can be applied to earthly things.

It is spring, when this sorrow falls. Before many weeks, Leonard Dane returns from his European wanderings, and condescends to pay a visit at the Hermitage. He is now a man nearly thirty, vicious, wicked, almost as completely wrecked in purse by his evil courses as he is in heart and mind; but smooth, plausible, able to act any part that interest may dictate, and handsomer even than Herbert, with his melancholy smile, and his great, luminous, dark eyes, that might have belonged to a poet.

Besides her dead husband, this cousin is the one human creature Margaret has ever loved. She knows him thoroughly—knows what his life has been; but by a strange ingenuous versatility, she pities, instead of blaming, and she means to carry the purpose she formed when Elinor blossomed into an heiress; she means him to become the master of this innocent girl and her fortune.

Months come and go! In the lonely waiting of her life, Elinor finds Leonard Dane's brotherly companionship the pleasantest, most unsailing solace. Margaret is kind, too. Letters reach the girl from Herbert, and time speeds on. They are going to Europe. Herbert approves of the plan, for he trusts his brother and their cousin, as implicitly as Elinor has learned to do.

So Elinor's eighteenth birthday arrives, and finds her in Paris. Leonard is there, too; his gifts are waiting for her when she wakes, this morning. She is anxious and troubled; it is some time since she has received letters from Herbert; but one will come to-day; she is certain of that. So she keeps herself cheerful, and after Margaret has been in to greet her, and bring presents and loving wishes, she sits down to write to her lover.

How long she remains dreaming and writing she never knows. Margaret is in the room again. Leonard is there, also. She has only to look in their faces, to know that her birthday has been smitten by some awful curse.

"Herbert is dead!" she cries.

"Not dead, but married," they tell her. They show her the announcement in a newspaper. Leonard produces a letter, which he has received from a friend, giving the details of Herbert's marriage with a wealthy heiress in Australia.

Elinor lives—that is so great a wonder to her, at first! She lives. She cannot even be ill. Her intense pride nerves her, and she teaches her soul to say that she despises her false lover—nay, she had never loved the man himself—only an ideal to whom she had given his name and likeness.

A fortnight drags past. Margaret goes to Dresden, to visit a friend, and Elinor remains in Paris. Her old governess is still with her, and Leonard Dano remains also. It is only a week later that a telegram comes from Margaret—she is very ill—Elinor must hasten to her at once—there is no time to lose—any day may be her last. There is barely time to make hurried preparations, and catch the night train. That very morning, Miss Liscom, the ex-governess, has sprained her ankle, and cannot stir from her sofa; Elinor's Normandy maid has been granted a holiday to visit her relatives; there is no one to take charge of the girl on her journey, except Leonard Dano. Whether she is violating any rule of convenience, in accepting this escort, Elinor is too confused and troubled to think; and Miss Liscom appears perfectly satisfied with the arrangement.

So, that evening, they start on their journey, which lasts the night and the next day. It seems that Margaret is at a country house, miles distant; there is a long drive to be taken on a dark, stormy evening. They reach a little hamlet; some accident has happened to one of the horses; there are no others to be got; it appears, too, that the coachman has mistaken the route, and brought them a league out of their way. So they have to spend the night at the village inn, and Elinor is so exhausted, that even the next morning Leonard declares she must still rest, as he has sent a telegram to Margaret, and received an answer to say that she is better.

But they reach their destination at last. They find Margaret in bed, but much less ill than Elinor expected, able indeed to sit up among her pillows, and indulge in violent hysterics; to upbraid Leonard, weep over Elinor, and protest that this unheard of journey, under his escort, will blast her darling's reputation forever.

Then Leonard tells the story of his love. He had never meant to do so. But he must speak now, since he has unintentionally brought trouble upon her; at least she must give him the right to watch over and guard her.

It all comes about very quickly. She is more dead than alive; she hardly know what to do. But there is one gleam of light, shining through the chaos of her misery. Leonard loves her—needs her; let her make some use, therefore, of her broken life!

So she is a bride. Leonard Dano is her husband. Some months have gone—how many she does not try to count; she endeavors to live only day by day, neither to look back, or forward, for already she has learned that the peace and rest, which were promised, are not to be hers.

They are established, for the winter, in a villa on the Riviera, within easy reach of Monaco; for Elinor finds that she has married a gamester, and begins to have warnings that this is only one, amid myriad vices, of which he is the slave.

Margaret is with them; kind and gentle sometimes; at others capricious and fretful; but whatever her mood, always afraid of Leonard. Elinor can see that. She is afraid, she who never feared any human being!

Elinor is seated alone in her garden, one beautiful afternoon. The house stands on a bold promontory, hanging out over the sea. Elinor has wandered down to the terrace, which was shaded by fragrant lemon trees; a wealth of oleanders and graceful palms about; in front, the sweep of gorgeous tinted waters; above, the clear, sapphro sky, that looks, oh! so far off, with a single strong-winged bird floating slowly away into its heavenly brightness.

She hears a step—hears her name uttered; turns, and sees Herbert North, standing before her. Herbert, stern and terrible as an avenging angel about to pronounce sentence upon her, for some unknown weakness or sin.

How dares he come? How dares he thrust his cowardice, his falsehood, athwart the chill monotony of her life? She is so torn by conflicting emotions—a vague wonder that he should have the hardihood to gaze at her with such menacing reproof, chief among them—that she cannot even speak, and bid him go as she wishes to do—cannot so much as lift her hand in sign of scornful dismissal, any more than if her limbs were made of lead.

Then his voice rings out, while his angry, disdainful eyes search, like a flame, through the mortal coldness, which freezes her very soul.

"I would not believe it—the letter came, but I would not believe," he says, slowly, and every word smites, like a knife, upon her heart. "I said I would come—I have made the journey—just to look in your face, in order that I might believe—I can now!"

He pauses, but she cannot speak—cannot stir.

After an instant which is like an age, she hears his voice again:

"I do not curse you. Maybe God will not. But you have cursed yourself! Never a word to prepare me. The news of your marriage, written by him, too, at your request, because you were on the eve of a journey and busy! There you sit. Are you dumb? No matter, I can believe now—I can believe! And I was waiting—working—hoping—for you—always for you—oh, the fools we men are! Not a thought, day or night, that was not yours. As soon a doubt of God and heaven as of you. And then the end came! You flung the story of your falsehood down upon me, and had no fear of ghost or judgment, oh, you—woman—there is no other word can serve to name your weakness and your crime!"

She hears. She comprehends that the letter, the newspaper announcement, were both false. But she cannot speak. As he turns away, she sinks slowly back in her chair; an insensibility, like that of death, envelopes her senses in its night. When she comes to herself, she is lying on the bed, in her room, and Margaret is hanging over her, in helpless terror. Leonard is there, too. She recollects everything. She rises, pushes Margaret back, and stands before her husband.

"It was a lie," she says, in a cold, still voice. "Herbert was not married, and you knew it."

He bursts out laughing.

"All stratagems are fair in love and war," he says. "My dear, you are my wife—I'd advise you not to forget it."

"From this moment, I will never see your face again," she says. "No power can compel me to do that!"

He laughs, though his features work and distort with a fiendish rage.

"Elinor, don't make him angry!" shrieks Margaret.

"Be quiet," he says. "Listen, you, my wife! You will neither go away, or try to keep your money out of my reach. If you do, I will bring lasting infamy on your father's name—your mother's, too—for he had a wife living when he married her."

"It is true, Elinor—he has the proofs!" moans Margaret.

"I will believe neither of you," answers Elinor. "Your proofs are forged, like those you brought me of Herbert's marriage! You cannot frighten me. You have had a child to deal with until now. But from to-day you have a woman, and a desperate one, too!"

And Leonard laughs still, while through the echo of his terrible merriment Margaret shrieks in agony:

"It is true, true! Elinor—your father—your

father! It was to save his memory, that I consented to deceive you. Oh, as you hope for mercy hereafter, help to save it now!"

"I do not believe," she replies, steadily; but she does; for there is truth in Margaret's face! She believes even before they show her the letters, the legal documents, which she knows could not have been forged.

After this, Elinor's life is a blank, for many weeks. But memory and strength come slowly back. Even yet she cannot die. She is so young, so strong, she cannot die.

"I could have walked through hell, that day, and never flinched," once wrote Elizabeth Browning; and beginning with her recovery, for five whole years, Elinor walks on in such an awful pilgrimage, as the poet pictured herself able to endure for perhaps an hour.

There is nothing spared her—nothing! Neither his kisses, or loving words, when he chooses thus to torment her, any more than the evidences of his most repulsive vices, when their thrall is upon him. She lives, and in the world, too. The power that is within her wakes, and she gives her books to the public, and grows famous. Her very beauty seems daily to increase; and between his love and hate, the wretch who is her master, is little better than a madman.

Five years go by. She is twenty-three—and then the end comes, as suddenly as the plunge into torment. Leonard Dano rides a steeple-chase; is thrown from his horse; is brought home to die. The injury is to the spine. He will linger for a day and night, perhaps, the physician says, suffering no pain. His mind is perfectly clear; but if he were already stiff and cold, the end could not be more certain.

Perhaps he has been mad, during these years. Elinor tries to think so, as she sits beside him; for he tells her that he has sent Herbert the true story of their marriage. "I didn't want to," he says. "If I had strength, I think I'd kill you now, and take you with me. But I had to let him know the truth!"

The hours go on. She watches by his bed. There is no fear, perhaps no penitence even, unless the pitiful utterance of her name might be thought to show such.

"Poor Nell, poor Nell!" he says, sometimes, studying her face, with his dim, glazed eyes.

He says it, at the last, just as day is breaking. The eyes, that are fastened so wistfully on her, brightens anew; a half smile softens the drawn mouth.

"Poor Nell!" he whispers again.

Then the light dies out of his face, and his soul has gone away to its own place:

Margaret enters a convent, and fasts, and prays, and scourges herself, and tries, by material penance, to find a little peace for her mind. And Elinor hopes she may attain it; so there is an end of her.

The truth reaches Herbert, too late. He has really married now; married, out of pity, a helpless young orphan, whose heart he has unwittingly won; so there is an end, too.

And the years go on—go on! A second fortune is left to Elinor, far greater than that which Leonard dissipated. Her fame grows. Even her beauty seems more perfect. The years, the years! She is eight-and-twenty now—eight-and-twenty.

So here she has sat, and watched the phantoms of her youth flit past. She rouses herself now to a consciousness that she has wasted hours in this unprofitable employment. The sun is setting. Its last rays make a golden halo in the vestibule. Where she crouches, the shadows already lie heavily.

"Dear God," she whispers, "at least, I have lived to be able to say, 'Thy will be done'—life is not all a waste so!"

She rises. As she turns to mount the stairs, a voice calls, through the stillness:

"Elinor, Elinor!"

She looks back.

There, in the flood of golden light, stands Herbert. His arms outstretched.

She is dizzy and faint. But even in this, first instant, she realizes that "old things have passed away, all things are new," as said the Apostle. Death is past—lo! the resurrection.

And as he folds her to his heart, in wordless happiness, the nightingales burst out in jubilant chant. The last, sunset glory fades, and through the great casement, at the back, the new moon looks in. The fountain sings. The scented wind whispers its rejoicing. And there the two long parted ones stand together.

"For God, who doeth all things in His season, doeth all things well!"

ALICE GRAY'S TRIAL.

BY MARY V. SPENCER.

Peterson's Magazine (1849-1892); Feb 1880; VOL. LXXVII., No. 2.; American Periodicals
pg. 109

ALICE GRAY'S TRIAL.

BY MARY V. SPENCER.



THE Rev. Philip Fitzgerald, Rector of All Saints, Highhurst, was famed, far and near, for his broad, Christian charity, not less than for his eloquence in the pulpit. Having inherited a large fortune, his alms did not have to be limited. His praise was, emphatically, "in all the churches."

Meantime, he had lived to the age of thirty, without having been married. His dream, nevertheless, was of a time, when a wife, perfect in all respects, would share his labors and brighten his fireside. His ideal was a lofty one, however; and this was why he was still unwedded.

It happened, one evening, when he was from home, on his annual vacation, that, passing the principal church of a neighboring city, he found the edifice lit up, as if for service. Arrested by

a voice, singing a solo, that rose, sweet and clear, as if it was an angel's floating down from heaven, he paused awhile, listening, and finally went in, taking a seat, in which he could see the choir and the singer. The latter proved to be a young lady, apparently about twenty years of age, with a face that would have been beautiful under any circumstances, but which now, under the inspiration of what she was singing, seemed absolutely transfigured.

At breakfast, the next morning, the rector said to his hostess, "I was at the Church of the Nativity, last night, and heard the most wonderful soprano."

"Ah," answered Mrs. Montrose, "Mrs. Wolcott's governess. She has a good voice, there's no denying it; and while her father lived, the best masters were her instructors. It's the old story, you know. Extravagant living, bankruptcy, death, and then the girl left an orphan."

"Poor thing!"

"Yes, I suppose so. But there must be governesses, and if not this one, then another. She's too pretty for her station, however; good looks make such girls conceited."

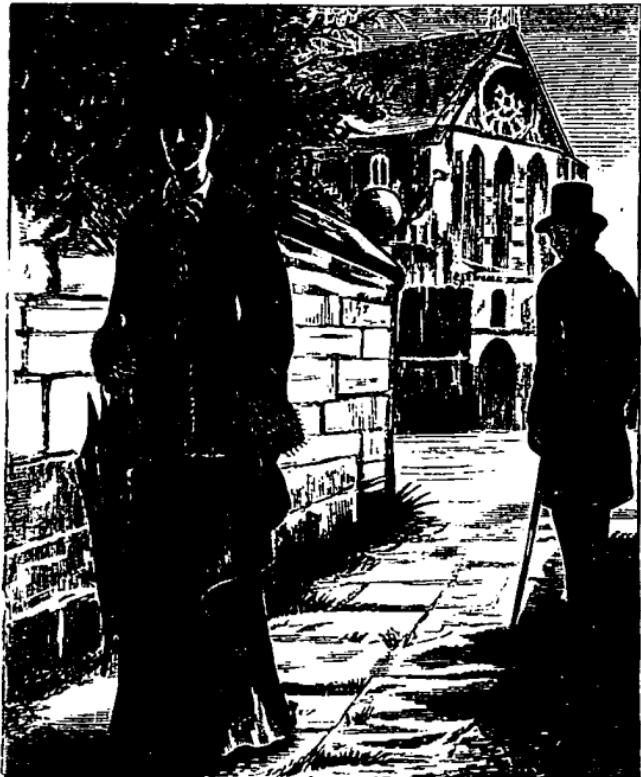
"Have they had that effect on her? Or do you speak only from general principles?"

"Well, from general principles, I suppose. The fact is, I know very little about her, and am not caring to hear more. Our conditions in life are so different."

The rector had often heard that great riches, suddenly acquired, spoiled people; but he had been too charitably minded to believe it before; and even now, though hearing Mrs. Montrose speak thus, he only sighed to himself.

"It is weak, human nature," he thought; "that is all."

A couple of hours subsequently, as he was going to make a call on his brother rector, he met, curious to say, the subject of this conversa-



the two daughters is grown up, Miss Gray has a little spare time to herself."

"Miss Gray is her name?"

"Yes. The rector is foolish enough to think I have something of a voice, and wishes me to cultivate it more thoroughly."

"Miss Gray has a very interesting face," said the Rev. Philip, as if absently. "I heard something of her history, from Mrs. Montrose, this morning."

"Poor dear!—I mean," with another smile, "Miss Gray, not Mrs. Montrose." And then the speaker launched into the story of her *protégée*.

"Miss Gray—Alice, I always call her," she said, in conclusion, "is so sweet-tempered. And brave, too; I may say heroic. She never complains of her ill-fortune, but accepts what she calls the inevitable."

It seemed to be determined that the Rev. Philip should not be allowed to forget Miss Gray.

The very next day he met her again. She had on, this time, a close-fitting walking-dress, but no wrap, for the day was comparatively warm, and her matchless figure looked more graceful than ever. Suddenly, she trod on an orange-peel, slipped, and fell.

The Rev. Philip was at her side in a moment.

"You are hurt," he said, assisting her to rise, and noticing how she flinched as she put her foot to the ground. "You have sprained your ankle. Let me call a cab."

"I—I—fear I have," she stammered, with white lips. "No, I can't walk," after a trial, and speaking with a suppressed groan, shutting her teeth hard.

A cab was passing, and in a moment more, the rector had summoned it, and they were driving to Mrs. Wolcott's, Alice having given him the name and address.

"If you will permit me," said the rector, when he had explained the accident to Mrs. Wolcott, "I will call, to-morrow, to see how Miss Gray is. I sincerely hope your hurt will not be serious," he said, as he shook hands, at parting with Alice, who faintly smiled her thanks.

He called, accordingly, but Miss Gray was invisible. "She will have to keep her room, for a few days, the doctor tells us," said Mrs. Wolcott.

tion. She walked with such a free, springing step, that, after he had passed, he turned to look back—a thing he had hardly ever done before; but he was struck by the willowy grace of her figure, which even a clumsy over-jacket—for the day was rather chilly—did not entirely conceal.

The Rev. Dr. Agnew was out, but his wife was at home. She rose from the piano, as her visitor entered.

"You see me at a strange business for a woman of my age, and the mother of two children," she said, smiling, as she shook hands. "I am taking singing lessons. If you had come, a little sooner, you would have met my teacher, our first soprano in the choir."

"Oh! then it must be the young lady, whom I passed, just now, back of your neighbor's garden-wall, and whom I heard, last night, in the church."

"The very same. You know, then, what a wonderful voice she has, and how pure her method is."

"Wonderful!"

"I think myself exceptionally fortunate in having such an instructress. But I only have her as a great favor on the part of her employers. She is governess at the Wolcott's, and as one of

"We cannot, meantime, thank you too much. My daughter—this is my daughter, Georgiana—feels it as much as I do."

The daughter, in a pretty speech, confirmed her mother's words. But, as soon as their visitor had left, turned on Mrs. Wolcott, taking her to task for having promised the rector should see Alice.

"It is so foolish of you, to let her come down to the drawing-room of evenings, as you do," she said, sharply. "Girls like Miss Gray should be taught to keep their place."

All which quite confirmed the opinion which the rector had arrived at, on the instant, concerning Miss Georgy, which was, that, though undeniably stylish, and even handsome, she was ill-tempered, and hard of heart.

The Rev. Philip called, daily, to inquire about Alice. He never found her, however, but always Georgiana instead.

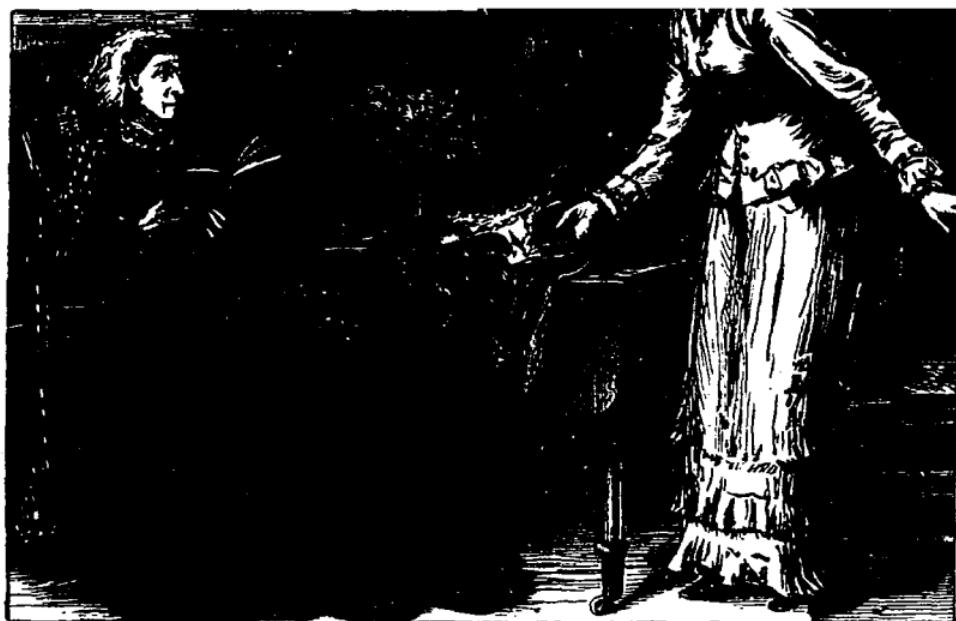
Georgiana was now twenty-five, and still unmarried. Quite sensible of the rector's handsome face, his large fortune, and his great reputation, she had determined from that first interview, to secure him as a husband, and therefore exerted all her fascinations for that purpose.

At last, Alice was allowed to leave her room; and thus the rector had now almost daily opportunities of seeing her. And the more he saw of her the more he admired her. Her beauty was her least charm. He found her thoroughly cultivated, not only in the literature of her own language, but in that of France and Germany. She had that rare quality which the Italians call

sympatica: she entered, at once, into another's feelings and ideas. Her conversation, too, was as sparkling as her mind was well-stored.

"I understand, now," the Rev. Philip said, one day, to Mrs. Agnew, "why you are so enthusiastic about Miss Gray. Her character seems to me to be one of the most perfect that I ever knew."

Of course he was not in the city all this time. But he fell into a habit of running away from his parish, during the week; and the evenings of that week were invariably spent at Mrs. Wolcott's. Naturally, after awhile, people began to gossip. But the gossip was not about him and Alice; it was about him and Georgiana. For Georgiana was always at home, come when he might; and latterly he saw much more of Georgiana than of Alice. Sometimes he was told that "Miss Gray was still busy in the school-room;" again that she had a headache: there was always an excuse. Once, when he regretted to Alice, that she had been too ill, the evening before, to appear, she raised her eyes, with a curious, astonished look, that made him, for the first time, suspect that she was purposely kept out of his way.



If he had heard the reports about himself and Georgiana, which that young lady took good care to propagate, he would have been still further enlightened; but he never doubted that every one knew what drew him to the Wolcott's: and yet so thorough-bred was his manner when both girls were present, that not only Mrs. Wolcott herself, who would naturally think he preferred her daughter, but even Alice, fancied that Georgiana was the attraction.

Not always, however. There were times when Alice, humble as she was, suspected that the rector cared for her; it was when she caught some look, or tone, that made her heart beat; but "nonsense," she would say, with her strong sense, "it is simply impossible; he would never care for a mere governess; Alice Gray, don't be a fool!"

The only one who was not in the least deceived was Georgiana. She had, at first, fancied that she might win the rector. But she was soon undeceived. Jealousy made her preternaturally sharp-sighted. "How I hate her!" she said, "the artful minx: she never was as much hurt as she pretended; she affected to be lame that she might lean on his arm."

At last, her jealous rage took such hold of her,

that she resolved to get rid of Alice at all hazards. "Once out of the way, and disgraced too," she said, to herself, "he will forget her, and then—"

So, one day, Georgiana came down to the breakfast-table, and said, as she sipped her coffee, "Mamma, I want that you should have the rooms and trunks of the servants examined, for I have lost my gold and ruby bracelet. I left it, very foolishly, on my dressing-table yesterday, and it is gone; I am sure some of the maids have stolen it."

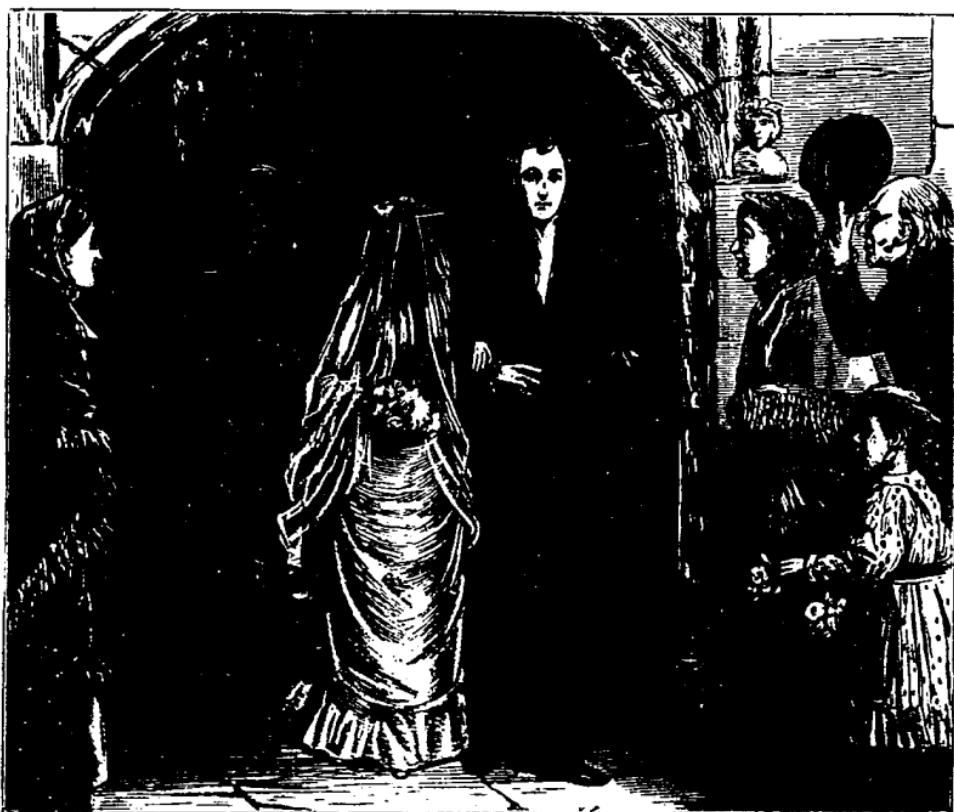
"Dear me, dear me," cried weak Mrs. Wolcott, "to think any one, in my house, should be a thief. I cannot believe it."

"But it's a fact," retorted the daughter, "and we'll have to believe it."

The search was instituted, but proved in vain, except that Georgiana's suspicions angered the cook, who gave notice to leave. When all was over, Mrs. Wolcott sat down, with a sense of relief.

"I'm sure I'm very thankful," she sighed, "that the bracelet hasn't been found. It would have been too dreadful, to have a thief in the house."

"We're not sure, even yet, that we haven't one," retorted the daughter, drily. "There's Miss Gray's bureau to be looked into."



"Miss Gray's! Surely you wouldn't—"

"Yes, I would. She's the most likely one of all. A common servant would be afraid to steal and wear anything so valuable; but this sly minx when she leaves us, can pretend it was saved from the wreck of her father's fortune."

"I wouldn't dare to propose such a thing as examining her things," said Mrs. Wolcott, all in a tremble.

"I don't intend to ask her permission," replied Georgy. "She's busy in the school-room, now; and we'll go at once to her chamber. If the bracelet isn't there, nothing need be said. I happen to know she keeps her drawers unlocked; she's often said so—and I've told her she was a fool for it."

Mrs. Wolcott, who was really kind, though weak, held out for some time; but Georgy's stronger will finally prevailed; and the bracelet, after due search, was found, hidden away among some handkerchiefs, far back in a drawer of Alice's bureau.

Mrs. Wolcott sank into a chair, almost fainting, at this discovery. "I'll never believe in anybody again," was all she could say, for a time. Even when she had recovered from the shock, she was for hushing the matter up. But Georgiana would not consent to this. "No," she said, "the girl must be made an example of; and papa, I am sure, will take the same view of it as I do."

Mr. Wolcott did take the same view as his daughter. "The case is plain," he said, "and justice demands we should tell the truth."

That evening, accordingly, after coffee had been served, Mr. Wolcott took a turn up and down the room, and then stopped before Alice, who sat at a little table, sewing. Mrs. Wolcott was in her usual chair, at the other side of the table, and pretended to be reading, though her hands shook so, that she could hardly hold the book. Georgiana was at the piano, at the far end of the room, idly playing improvised variations.

"Will you be so good, Georgy," said her father, emphasizing his words with his eye-glasses, which he held in his hand, a habit of his when nervous, "to stop playing for awhile. I have something to say to Miss Gray."

Then he made his accusation; saying, in conclusion, "The best thing you can do, now, Miss Gray, is to make a free confession. The proof is unanswerable, and would convict you, before any jury. The temptation, no doubt, was very great. You naturally supposed you would be the last person to be suspected. But if you show repentance, by owning the truth, we will overlook it; that is we will not prosecute—"

Up to this point, Alice had sat, in dumb amazement, hardly able to take in all that was meant. But now she rose from her chair. She looked first at Mr. Wolcott, and then at Georgiana. Both faces, she saw, were hard as steel. Then she turned to Mrs. Wolcott.

"You, you, surely don't believe this foul falsehood," she cried, leaning over the table, and addressing Mrs. Wolcott. "I never would have believed that you, at least, with your good heart—you, who have been to me, in some things, almost a mother—would have consented to the meanness of secretly examining my bureau, much less believe me guilty." Then, overcome by the vehemence of her emotions, she sank back in her chair, and gave way to a tempest of sobs.

For a moment, even Mr. Wolcott was startled. To hear one, usually so placid as Alice, burst out in this way, made him catch his breath. Really, it looked like innocence, he thought. He glanced at his daughter hesitatingly.

But Georgy hastened to his rescue. "Don't be taken in by her tragic airs," she whispered, scornfully, as she came to his side. "It's all part of the play."

Mr. Wolcott, accordingly, recovered himself.

"Miss Gray," he said, sternly, "the insolence of your manner convinces me, more forcibly, if possible, than the direct evidence, not only that you are guilty, but that your heart is hopelessly depraved. Still; I will not act without giving you due time for répentance. Go to your room, now, and think it over. If, by to-morrow, you confess, I will let you go, and will keep silence. If not, if you still keep up this defiant air, I shall hand you over to the police."

Imagine what a night that was for Alice! She never went to sleep at all; she did not even undress. She sat on the side of her bed, her face buried in her hands, her frame shaking with sobs. What could she do? Where could she turn? In all the world, she had not a friend to go to.

"Who will believe me," she cried, "when the Wolcotts, with their social influence, accuse me? Oh, dear papa, if you were only living!" Then, by a natural sequence, she thought of the Great Father of all, to whom no one was an orphan, in whose eyes all are equal. "Thou, Thou," she sobbed; "knowest I am innocent. Help me, in this, my sore strait. I have no one to counsel with; be Thou my counsellor."

She had hardly uttered this prayer, when she thought, for the first time, of Mrs. Agnew. More than any other, Mrs. Agnew had been her friend. "Perhaps she, at least, will believe me," thought the poor girl. "If I can only

get one of the servants to carry a note to her, early to-morrow! Mary may be willing to do it." Mary was the chamber-maid, and worshipped Alice, for the latter had been always kind and sympathetic to her.

She turned up the gas, went to her Davenport, and began to write her letter. In it, she told of the crime of which she was accused, and the evidence of it; but she said nothing of her suspicion as to who had hid the bracelet. "No," she said to herself, "though I am as sure it was Georgiana as that I live, I will not betray her; her mother has been too kind to me. God is just, and He will yet find some way to exonerate me."

But Mrs. Agnew was not blind, nor as over scrupulous as Alice. She had never forgotten the enthusiasm with which the Rev. Philip had spoken of her *protégé*; she was satisfied he loved the girl; and she was just as sure that Georgiana knew it also, was jealous, and had played this bold stroke to ruin her rival. Thus, when Mary, Mrs. Wolcott's housemaid, brought the note, and insisted that it should be sent up, even though Mrs. Agnew had not yet left her room, that lady not only wrote a hurried reply, saying she would see Alice directly she had breakfasted, and was sure Alice was innocent, meantime underlining the word twice, but broke out, indignantly, before her husband, accusing Georgiana as the author of all this mischief. "I never liked the girl's face," she said; "it's a treacherous, vindictive one."

Mr. Agnew was less emotional, and did not jump at conclusions so quickly; but by the time breakfast was over, he was brought round to his wife's opinion. He had not, from the first, questioned the innocence of Alice. But from that to accusing Georgiana was a long step. The more he considered the subject, however, the more he became convinced that this was the only solution to the mystery.

"The difficulty will be to prove the girl's complicity," he said. "We must go to work, cautiously, my dear. I shall accompany you, of course. We will bring Alice back with us," he added, "in spite of them; I'll even defy them to send for the police. Let them do it, if they dare."

At which Mrs. Agnew jumped up, threw her arms about his neck, kissed him, and bursting into tears, vowed he was the "dearest, best, bravest man that ever lived;" and then hurried off to get her bonnet and wraps to accompany him, while he rang the bell for a carriage.

The Agnews arrived while the Wolcotts were still at breakfast, and Mr. Agnew, not waiting to

be announced, pushed directly into the room, followed by his wife.

"What is this I hear?" he cried, as soon as the servant had left. "Accusing Miss Gray of theft?" And he looked his host full in the face, till the latter quailed before him. "Tut, tut, Wolcott, you know better."

"But Georgiana found the bracelet in her bureau."

Mr. Agnew turned suddenly to Georgiana. The girl tried to brave it out, and returned the look with haughty scorn. But both Mr. Agnew and his wife saw conscious guilt, or believed they did, in her very bravado.

"And if I should slip a bracelet into your coat-pocket," he said, turning to Mr. Wolcott again, "and afterwards find it there, would you think that sufficient proof that you had stolen it? Come, we all know Miss Gray, and we know she is incapable of such a thing, as you would be, Wolcott, in spite of the bracelet in your pocket."

"If Mr. Agnew has come here, papa, to insinuate that somebody put the bracelet in Miss Gray's bureau," said Georgiana, firing up, "he insults us, and I, for one, will not stop to hear it."

Mr. Agnew, as she turned to leave, gave her another look, and she perceptibly withered under it. She felt that her very haste, in repelling his insinuation, had convinced him that she knew all about the affair. "But they haven't any proof," she said, biting her lip till the blood came, as she went up to her room, "and they never will have. Pa will stick by me, and," vindictively, "I'll ruin the girl yet."

We pass over the rest of that interview. It ended, however, in the Agnews carrying Alice off. Mr. Wolcott, on his part, would bind himself to nothing.

"I will see about it," he growled. "Take the girl with you, and welcome; but I'm not sure my duty won't compel me to prosecute, nevertheless; we shall see, we shall see."

Words would fail to describe the gratitude of Alice to the Agnews. The moment she was alone with them she flung her arms around Mrs. Agnew.

"You have saved me!" she sobbed. "Some few, at least, will now believe me innocent. That will be one consolation, even in prison."

"Prifus?" Tut, tut, that's nonsense," broke in Mr. Agnew.

"If anybody is to be sent to prison," cried Mrs. Agnew, vehemently, between her tears, for she was crying also, "it will be Georgiana—"

"Georgiana? I never said anything about—"

"You needn't be so Quixotic, child," interposed Mrs. Agnew again. "We know all about it."

"But she hasn't confessed?" said Alice, lifting up her face, with wide-open eyes.

"No, nor ever will, I suppose," answered Mr. Agnew. "Girls, with lips as thin as hers, are as close-mouthed as they are cruel. Wild horses would hardly drag it from her. But we're both sure she hid the bracelet in your drawer, my dear; and we hope to prove it on her yet; there is a God, after all, and a righteous One, too."

Just her thought, Alice remembered, just her thought, the night before, in her very darkest hour. And now she murmured, "Yes, a righteous God!"

Mr. Agnew's prediction was not long in being verified. Before the morning was half over, a charwoman called to see him, whom he knew as having been employed by the Wolcotts to carry coal up to the rooms, and do other rough work. Her story was soon told.

"I've just heard of this dreadful thing," she said, "or I'd have come sooner. Cook comes and tells me about it. Well, it's Miss Georganny that put the bracelet in the drawer; I seed her, day before last, as I was passing Miss Alice's room; she was in there, and had the drawer open, and was pushing a glittering thing, a bracelet I saw it was, far back in the drawer. I thought she'd only been rummaging in the young lady's bureau, as I'd seed her do, once or twice before. I never thought she was up to this. Oh! she's a bad un, she is."

Mr. Agnew sought, at once, a second interview with Mr. Wolcott. This time he repaired to that gentleman's office, as he did not wish the poor wife and mother ever to know the truth about Georgiana. The result was that Mr. Wolcott agreed, not only not to go further in the matter, but to hush the affair up, and to assert, every-

where, the innocence of Miss Gray, should the story get out. "Not that I believe a word the woman says," he concluded, stubbornly, "but naturally I don't want Georgy's name brought forward. You understand."

Mr. Agnew did understand. But he knew, nevertheless, that Mr. Wolcott was his secret enemy from that day forward. The compact was indeed kept, and the story hushed up, so that few ever knew that Alice had been accused of theft. But, after a decent interval, Mr. Wolcott sold his pew at Mr. Agnew's church, in spite of its being the most aristocratic one in the city, and went elsewhere, giving out, as his reason, that, for his part, he thought Mr. Agnew's power as a preacher was failing.

This was not, however, until after Alice's marriage. For the reader must have guessed what followed. Chance had brought the Rev. Philip to the city, the very day Alice came to Mrs. Agnew's, and calling there, he heard, from his hostess, the whole story.

A few minutes later found him alone with Alice. The sight of her agitated face was too much for him. He had refrained, heretofore, from declaring his love, lest he should be thought premature, but now his emotion mastered him, and he pleaded his suit in such a way, that even if Alice had not already secretly worshipped him, she could hardly have withheld his eloquence.

The marriage took place, a few weeks after, and as Alice came out of the church, in her bridal veil, leaning on her proud and happy husband's arm, the porch was thronged with the many poor, whom, even with her limited means, she had managed to assist, and their blessings followed her as she drove off.

ALICE VERNON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM," "DORA ATHERTON," &c.

[Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by Charles J. Peterson, as the proprietor, in the Clerk's Office, of the District Court of the U. S., in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 87.

MR. VERNON had banished his favorite daughter. But was he, therefore, happy?

How could he be happy, when everything reminded him of her. If the library door opened, he unconsciously looked up, expecting to see her cheerful smile. If he heard a step near the piano, he turned to ask Alice for a favorite air, before he could remember she was gone.

Though a stern man, he could not endure this. Suddenly it was announced, to the astonishment of all, that his magnificent establishment was to be brought to the hammer, as he intended to travel for several years.

Curiosity was on the alert to discover the reasons. The elopement of his younger daughter gradually became known, but the facts were frequently exaggerated, and the usual story painted the guilt of Alice in the darkest colors. So much was this the case, indeed, that Randolph found his professional prospects seriously injured, for most of the few patrons he had were members of the same circle as the Vernons, and thought that, in casting him off, they were avenging an outraged father.

Poor Alice! how crushed she was, how pale and humbled, under this accumulation of misfortunes. She had now awoke to a sense of her sinfulness. She wondered, indeed, how she could ever have cred, the violation of duty seemed to her so flagrant.

And yet she loved her husband as much as ever, ay! ten thousand times more. She took to herself all the blame of their hasty marriage. Nay, she went further, she secretly lamented that she had embarrassed, if not ruined Randolph. All this made her weep often when alone. But no sooner did her husband enter, than duty united with love to chase the tears from her face; she put on her brightest smiles; and a stranger, to have seen her then, would have thought that never was bride so happy.

They lived in small lodgings, in a second rate street, one room being occupied as Randolph's studio, while in the other they lived. A half grown Irish girl was cook, maid and servant of all work. Economy characterized every department of their little establishment, for except the

jewels which had been sent after Alice, and the remains of the last picture Randolph had sold, they had no resources.

Yet, poor as they were, poor at least compared to what Alice had once been, the natural taste of the young wife was seen in the many little beautiful articles, scattered about their solitary apartment. The costliest of these were wrecks of her former life, elegant work-boxes, cologne-bottles, ink-stands, or other pretty feminine trifles: but the chief charm of the room consisted in the number and variety of plants, most of which Alice had purchased in pots, in the market, and which kept the chamber filled with fragrance. There were tea-roses, daily-roses, verbena, heliotrope, mignonette, geraniums, an Egyptian lily, the towering yellow jessamine, and the bell-shaped, orange-colored arbutum, all of which it was her daily task to water and tend.

Alice had made several attempts to see her father, but her letters, soliciting an interview, were invariably returned unopened. Randolph, whose high spirit had ill-brooked her perseverance under such indignities, at last interfered and positively forbade her to make any more efforts.

"Only once more, George," she said, pleadingly, the tears in her sweet eyes. "I have done very wrong, and pa has reason to be angry. But he may yet relent, you know. I can but try. It is my duty to try, is it not?"

"I don't feel sure of that, dearest," he said, putting his arm around her waist, drawing her to him, and kissing her. "It seems to me that your father's anger is disproportional to the offence. I have never looked on your disobedience, moreover, as the crime you morbidly think it——"

But the wife, half playfully, yet half sadly still, putting her tiny hand on his mouth, stopped his words.

"Oh! George," she said: and gave him such a look.

"Well, well, dearest; I won't quarrel with you. But it chafes me, you don't know how it chafes me, to see you treated with such silent scorn."

"Ah! George, didn't I treat pa worse? I never said a word to him, you know, but went off and married you, as if I did not care whether he liked it or not."

"But if he had been told, he would have opposed us, and then you would have been driven into open disobedience. We talked all this over, at the time. At first I wished, as you remember, to go to Mr. Vernon——"

"You did, you did. But somehow," and she looked up with a bewildered air, "I thought the way we took would be the best, though how I could have fallen into such a delusion I cannot tell. It seems to me now that I did the very worst thing I could."

Strange that, even yet, she had never suspected Isabel. Perhaps her husband had, but if so he kept his own counsel: he did not wish to grieve Alice, who still, infatuated girl, loved and esteemed her sister. And it was rather Isabel's studied avoidance of them that made Randolph suspect what he did, than any positive facts which had come to his knowledge, for Isabel never visited them, and though, if she passed them on the street, as had once or twice been the case, she bowed, it was with a distance and coldness that precluded speaking. Simple, trusting Alice attributed this to the commands of her father, and felt certain that, in the end, Isabel would gain their pardon: but Randolph began at last to suspect the secret hostility of the elder sister, though as yet even he could not divine the cause.

"Well, its no use regretting what is past," resumed Randolph. "In truth, Elsie," he had pet names too for his darling, "you sometimes make me almost angry. One would think you did not love me."

She started up from his bosom, on which she had been leaning, her eyes dilating with astonishment.

"To be sure," he said, half laughing at her look. "Don't you always talk as if you regretted marrying me——"

"Oh! George, how can you?"

Her eyes filled with tears; the words choked in her throat.

He was cut to the heart. Taking her head between his hands, he stooped and kissed her tears away.

"Don't take my hasty words, little one, in earnest. I didn't mean that you don't love me." She began to smile again, though faintly and sadly. "But I really cannot see that you committed such a crime in marrying me. No parent has a right, I think, to separate two hearts that love, unless there are better reasons for a refusal than existed in our case."

"I know, I know. But still, dear George, it

is dreadful to feel that a parent, and an only parent too, is angry with you, especially when your own conscience tells you that you did wrong. You know we might still have loved each other, even if we had not married."

Randolph bent down, kissed her, and whispered,

"Yes! but not as now."

The beautiful cheek was dyed in blushes; the large eyes looked timidly at his for a moment; and then the face was buried in his bosom, while the small hand closed tightly on his own.

"Forgive me, George," she murmured, after a moment. "Don't think I prize your love too little. Oh!" and again the face was lifted radiantly to his own, "how often I reproach myself that, by marrying you when I did, I deprived you of so many comforts, by compelling you to share your narrow income with one so extravagant as I am."

"Hush, pet bird, not a syllable of that. I feel prouder this hour," and he looked proud enough to be sure, as he glanced around, "to hold my little wife in my arms, and to know that she is here to soothe my cares with her sweet smiles, than if I owned a kingdom without her."

"Ah, flatterer!" And she tried to free herself, blushing and smiling, and playfully continuing, "but some of these days, when pa relents, for indeed I can't believe he will always be angry with me, I'll pay you, oh, with what elegant things! for all these nice compliments. You shall have such a superb dressing-gown, instead of this poor, faded old thing; and such exquisite Turkish slippers, pa has just the pattern; and a studio fit for Raphael; and the handsomest horse that can be bought: for you are a dear, nice old fellow, after all," and she threw her arms around his neck suddenly, like a spoiled child, and kissed him, "and have really earned a whole ship load of gifts for being so forbearing to poor little me."

A blessed thing is wedded love. Blessed even in poverty and sorrow. Blessed in its little, innocent blandishments, as in its deeper sympathies and consolations. God knows this would be but a poor, miserable world without it.

Meanwhile Mr. Vernon was hurrying from one capital in Europe to another, in hopes, by constant change of scene, to forget Alice. For he loved that daughter, notwithstanding his severity toward her, with a feeling that mingled the fervor of youth with the memories of age. To him she was not only the favorite child, but a continual reminiscence of his lost wife, for he could never think of the face of the one without recalling that of the other. His very cruelty toward her had been increased by the depth of these feelings. Natures like his, are angry at disobedience in

proportion to the extent of the affection they have entertained.

He found he could not live without her. Yet his will struggled continually against his tenderness, so that the more he suffered, the more resolute he strove to be. But his physical system gradually gave way in this conflict. After an absence of two years, he suddenly told Isabel that he should return to America, and in less than a week they were actually on the broad Atlantic.

When he reached his native city, his old friends scarcely recognized him. The once vigorous frame was bowed, the cheek sunken, the eye dim: he was but the wreck of his former self.

He returned, as he well knew, to die. "A young oak may recover from a lightning stroke," he said, "but not an old and worn-out trunk." But oh, how he yearned, before he died, to see his Alice once more. And had she, at that time, fallen at his feet, implored his pardon, and presented her little daughter, the very image of herself, he would have forgiven all. But he was too proud to send for her, much as he suffered. Oh! that pride.

Isabel, who could not but see the workings of his mind, was resolved that whatever else might happen, his sister should never have an interview with their father. Mr. Vernon, before he left for Europe, had executed a will, in which Isabel was made his sole heir. Her revenge would be foiled if this will should be revoked, and that it would be cancelled, if her sister gained their father's presence, she felt certain.

Fearing that Alice might seek an interview, she left the most strict injunctions with the servants, that no one should be admitted to his presence without she was at home. In all his rides abroad she accompanied him also. But accident had nearly frustrated her precautions, and that by means entirely unexpected.

The married life of Randolph and Alice had been blessed with one child, a daughter, who was one of those rare and angelic beings that sometimes are seen on earth. Lily Randolph was less of mortal mould than a visitant from another sphere. From her earliest infancy, she had been as sweet-tempered as she was lovely, and with her delicate complexion, sunny hair, and winning smile she was the loveliest of children. She never went into the street that strangers did not stop her to caress and kiss her. There seemed to linger, on the memory of this angel-child, visions of the celestial world. Everything that was beautiful, from a violet to a star, she adored with a fervor and earnestness that was wonderful in one so young. The first thing she had noticed particularly had been a flower in her mother's chamber, and from that hour up she

had passionately admired those fair and fragile things. Her little heart was all affection. Even those persons who were generally indifferent to children—and, strange to say, there are such—were won by her beautiful smile, by her loving eyes, by the very way in which she stood silently at their knees. To those who were dear to her, her thousand innocent modes of caressing, all so graceful, yet so varied, rendered her, day by day, more and more their idol. To her parents she had become as necessary as life itself. She had grown, indeed, a part of themselves. This was especially the case with respect to the mother, who was her almost constant companion. Between these two a strange bond had sprung up, for in many things this child was above her years. When Randolph was busy in his studio, they were sole and nearly constant companions. Rarely was Lily taken for a walk unless by her mother. Living thus ever together, with no other interests to distract their attention, their affection had the depth of that between adults, but oh! with how much more purity and heavenliness. Lily seemed always instinctively to divine her mother's mood, prattling and smiling when it was joyful, and nestling to her condolingly when it was sad.

One day the faithful Irish nurse, who had served Alice during the first year of Lily's life, and who often came to see her darling, and obtain the honor of taking her out for a walk, had the little girl in one of the public squares. The child, who had been confined to the house, unavoidably, for some days, was in a state of the highest excitement. The beautiful, sparkling fountain, the waving trees, the butterflies, but most of all the flowers scattered about, rendered her almost wild with delight. Her bright eyes, heightened color, and golden curls waving as she ran to and fro, attracted every one's attention. They particularly riveted the gaze of an invalid old man, who had tottered into the square, attended by a man-servant, and now sat on one of the benches. For a long time he watched the child's motions, quick and graceful as those of a bird; and, at last, when she came near, he called her to him.

The little girl stopped pantingly and looked to see who spoke. The sad countenance and decrepid figure of the old man touched her heart. Leaving the beautiful butterfly, which she had been chasing, she came and stood by the invalid's knee, looking up sympathizingly into his face.

"What is your name, my dear?" said the old man, in a kindly voice, taking her hand.

"Lily," she said, frankly, tossing back the bright curls from her sunny face.

"Do you like playing here?"

"Oh! yes, for everything is so beautiful," she

answered, enthusiastically. "There are such pretty flowers, and, in the morning, such dear little birds: you don't know how sweetly they sing; you should come and hear them." And she smiled up in his face, as if she had known him for years.

The old man's heart yearned strangely to that child. In other years he had been blessed with a daughter of whom this little girl continually reminded him. It seemed to him, indeed, as if his darling looked at him again from those very eyes. There was emotion in his voice, therefore, as he continued,

"And do you like the fountain?"

"Oh! yes," was the rapturous answer, "so much. And isn't it pretty this afternoon? Sometimes it goes, straight up, you know, to the sky, and falls plump down. But I like it better when, as to-day, it curls over at top, just like a flower."

"You are a little poet, my dear," said Mr. Vernon, for our readers have divined that it was he. "Did your ma never tell you so?"

She scarcely understood what he meant. So she looked inquiringly at him, and then replied, in her sweet, innocent way,

"Mamma tells me to be a good girl, and pray to God; and I do, every night too; for papa, and mamma, and nurse, and grandfather, and aunt—"

"Grandfather!" interrupted Mr. Vernon, a strange suspicion flashing across him: and he drew the child yet closer, and gazed eagerly into her face. "Have you a grandfather?"

"Yes, but I never saw him, though mamma says I will some day. He is gone away, oh! ever so far."

"Then you expect to see him when he returns?"

"Mamma says she hopes so. But she cries when she says it. Do grandfathers always make mammas cry?"

As she spoke, she looked up into Mr. Vernon's face, with an earnest, inquiring, serious gaze, as if her little heart was troubled deeply with this mystery. The old man could bear it no longer. The tears rushed to his dim eyes, and he said, falteringly,

"What is your father's name, my dear?"

The blue eyes of the child distended with surprise, and then immediately a sad, sympathizing expression stole to her face. She drew nearer to the invalid as she answered in a low and less eager voice,

"Pa's name is Mr. Randolph. You should know papa, he paints such beautiful pictures."

But the strain on Mr. Vernon's feelings was too great: he did not hear Lily conclude her sentence; for, at the mention of her father, and

the confirmation of his suspicions, he groaned, and fell back as if lifeless.

All was now confusion. The child, terrified and concerned, burst into tears and even shrieks; while the footman, who had stood at a respectful distance, rushed up to his master's assistance. Lily was overthrown, and would have been trampled under in the press, if her nurse had not flown to her assistance, and carried her off, plentifully abusing the footman for having, as she said, "been nearly the death of her darlint, the impudent baste of a man."

Mr. Vernon was taken home, and continued, for some time, insensible. His first question, when he finally came to, was after his grandchild. Isabel thought, at first, he was raving, but when she was told that he had really been conversing with a little girl in the park, at the time he was seized, she divined the truth. But she would not admit it to others. She told the servant sharply that Mr. Vernon had no grandchild, and that only delirium, or dotage could explain his asking for one.

From that day the invalid never rose from his bed. Isabel was now constantly with him, almost entirely excluding assistance: her concern, she said, would not allow her to leave him.

Alice, meantime, had heard from both the nurse and Lily, of the latter's adventure; but little did she suspect who the invalid was. By accident, however, she learned her father's sinking condition, and obtained her husband's consent to make a last effort to see him. "If he should die," she said, "and I unforgiven, I could never again be happy."

Accordingly, with a palpitating heart, almost a week after the meeting of Lily and Mr. Vernon, the discarded daughter rung the bell at her father's magnificent portal.

A strange servant came to the door, which he held only half open, standing carefully in the aperture.

"Can I see Mr. Vernon?" said Alice.

Her voice was tremulous as she spoke, and she was so faint that she clung to the door-frame.

The servant eyed her with astonishment. Ignorant alike of her person, and of the family history, he could not account for this agitation.

"Mr. Vernon is sick and can see no one," he said, and without moving from his position.

But Alice, roused to mortal terror at these words, which implied that her father was dying, found all her strength returning, and with a boldness that, at any other time, she would have been incapable of, she pushed by the footman, entered the hall, and laid her hand on the parlor door.

"Is he dying? Does he keep his bed?" she asked, hurriedly, as the servant, bowing and deprecating, followed her.

The man would have repeated in words, what his manner had already said, but there was something in Alice that awed and prevented him. He felt that he would rather receive the rebuke of his mistress, for disobedience, than tell this poor, agitated creature that his orders were, on no account, to admit anybody.

"Is he dying? tell me—oh! don't keep me in suspense," cried Alice, stopping, with her hand on the door, as she saw the servant's irresolution, which she mistakenly attributed to another cause.

"He is not considered in immediate danger, ma'am," replied the man, opening the door for her. "But Miss Vernon's orders are that nobody should see him. The doctors say he must be kept quiet. Will you take a seat?" And he offered her a chair.

Alice sank gratefully to the seat, for a reaction had come, and she was again trembling all over. For some moments her mind was in a whirl of confused ideas, her only clear perception being that what she had heard of her father's illness fell short of the truth.

Meantime the footman gazed at her in respectful silence, for there is something in real emotion to touch even the rudest heart. At last Alice looked up, and said,

"Can I see Isabel?"

The servant stared. Long as he had been in that house, he had never heard his mistress called anything but Miss Vernon. Who could this stranger be, he asked himself, who spoke familiarly of the haughty heiress?

Alice, even in her great grief and suspense, noticed his astonishment, and hastened to correct herself.

"I mean Miss Vernon," she said.

The servant bowed, and answered, "your card, ma'am, if you please."

But Alice answered, "never mind, tell her it is a friend, an old schoolmate."

Still, however, the footman hesitated, bowing, and looking the request he could not repeat.

"Say it is on urgent business," added Alice, eagerly, noticing this. "I know she will come if you tell her that."

The servant departed, though with reluctant steps, and Alice was left alone to prepare for the interview with her sister. Her sister, whom she had not seen for so long, and whom an instinctive feeling, now experienced for the first time, warned her was not, perhaps, her friend.

More than a quarter of an hour elapsed before Isabel made her appearance. Had the room been the one in which she had formerly spent so many happy hours; had it been furnished with the old, familiar articles, Alice would have given way, under the tide of recollections thus forced

on her: but the house was a new one, and the furniture was new also, so that she managed to preserve, in a great degree, the fortitude so necessary to her.

At last the door opened and Isabel entered.

She had grown thinner and haughtier since Alice had last seen her. The lines of her face were sharp, the eyes sunken, the brow contracted into a slight frown. Peevishness and hauteur were the prevailing expressions of the countenance. Had Alice met her in the street, she would scarcely have recognized her.

But, at first, Alice did not notice these changes. She knew, almost before she looked, that it was Isabel entering. With the first motion of the door she had sprung to her feet, all the old sisterly love gushing in her bosom, and rapidly advanced, with extended arms.

But Isabel, cold, repellent, disdainful, drew back rigidly. For an instant, indeed, she had started; but it was only for an instant; and immediately she was as immovable as marble. Poor Alice, checked in mid career, turned scarlet, her extended arms sinking to her sides; while the elder sister, without uttering a word, continued, for some time, to regard her with haughty scorn and anger. At last Isabel spoke.

"To what, Mrs. Randolph, are we indebted for this visit?"

But Alice could not answer. It was impossible for her, all at once, to realize that this was Isabel, the playmate of her childhood, her only and darling sister. With her large, soft eyes dilated with wonder; her lips parted; and every vestige of color gone from her cheeks, she stood, for a full minute, gazing at Isabel.

A civil sneer crept to the lips of the latter, as she saw this, and with cold hauteur she repeated.

"To what are we indebted, Mrs. Randolph, for this visit?"

And now, at last, Alice spoke. Heaving a deep sigh, she looked reproachfully at her sister, and said, "oh! Isabel."

The tone and glance would have melted any heart but one steeled against all pity. They produced no impression on Isabel, however, for she saw in Alice, not the sister, but only the hated bride of Randolph. The sneer deepened on her thin lips as she answered,

"My time is precious, madam, and you will oblige me by stating your business."

The color rushed back to the cheek of Alice at these cruel words, and indignation, such indignation as her gentle heart could feel, gave her strength to say. "I have come to see my father. I hear he is dangerously ill—"

She would have said more, but the elder sister interrupted her.

"To see your father," she answered. "Do

you wish to insult him? After having, by your disobedience, brought him to what will prove, perhaps, a bed of death, can you so wantonly outrage his feelings as to seek to force yourself upon him?"

Alice gazed at her sister in fresh amazement at these words. Was this the confidant, who had persuaded her to disobedience, and who now, not only disavowed all participation in that crime, but actually reproached her? Indignation, however, came again to her aid.

"Force myself upon him, after bringing him to a bed of death, oh! Isabel, how dare you, how can you use such language? Was it I only that was guilty? Did you not almost advise all that I did? Did you not promise to reconcile papa to me? And now to talk so! Isabel, sister Isabel," she cried, all other feelings subsiding into the agony of unutterable grief, "oh! don't look and talk so cruelly, but get pa to receive me, or my heart," and she placed her hands passionately on it, "my poor heart will break."

And did not even this move Isabel? Perhaps it did. Perhaps she had already been moved to her innermost soul, notwithstanding that cold, haughty, contemptuous look. But if so, pride and revenge had triumphed over all softer emotions. None are utterly wicked, and Isabel was far from being so. In charity to her we must suppose that even her harshness had been exaggerated, from a fear that, if she was less cruel, the part she had resolved to play could not be kept up. She had doubtless dreaded the effect of Alice's voice and look on her heart, and hoped, by a distant and haughty air, at once to repel the suppliant; and now, as she found herself deceived, as she saw Alice grow more earnest, she steeled herself with new barbarities.

"This interview is equally unwise and painful," she said, in a cold voice, yet one that was husky notwithstanding her efforts to make it seem natural. "I will not reproach you, madam, as you have reproached me, though, if you consult your memory, you will recollect that I gave no advice, and assumed no responsibility. And when I see what your disobedience has brought your father to, you must excuse me if I say that, in everything, I coincide with papa——"

"Oh! Isabel, oh! Isabel——"

"Pray don't interrupt me, madam," sharply continued the speaker. "I coincide, I say, entirely with pa. His health, already shattered by your misconduct, must not be endangered by an interview, which could be only painful to him, and which, I should think, none but base motives on your part could have suggested."

Infamous taunt! And from a sister too! What lost spirit, burning with hate and revenge, could have formed such bitter words for those lips?

Alice made no answer. This last insinuation deprived her even of the strength which indignation had given her. She burst into tears. Covering her face with her hands, she sobbed aloud, shaking convulsively as if body and spirit were parting.

Minute after minute passed, yet still that passion of overstrained emotions continued. At last, however, she grew composed. The thought of her father, dying overhead, and dying without forgiving her, gradually banished all other feelings, and she looked up, intending to make a final effort to move Isabel.

But Isabel was gone. Taking advantage of Alice's convulsive grief, the elder sister had stolen noiselessly from the room.

A new flood of tears rushed to the eyes of Alice as she saw this. She felt that the decree was irrevocable, which separated her from her father; and her gentle nature sank under it. But, after a while, the realities of her situation began to impress themselves on her. What if one of the servants should appear, and see her weeping? Or what if Isabel should despatch a footman to thrust her from the house, for any thing was possible from Isabel after the cruel words of the late interview?

She rose, therefore, from the chair where she had sunk, gathered her shawl about her, and left the parlor. In the hall she encountered the servant who had admitted her, and who had apparently been waiting, under instructions, until she should appear. He stepped briskly to the door, opened it, and stood bowing low, as if for her to pass. And thus Alice went forth, for the second and last time, expelled from her father's house.

Alice never recollects how she got home on that day. From the moment she left her father's portal, till she entered her own, all was a chaos.

But when the door of her boarding-house was opened at her well-known ring, there came bounding toward her a vision of beauty that would have shed sunshine into a heart even more desolate than hers. It was her little daughter!

Lily saw, immediately, that her mother was grieved at something, so the boisterous gladness of her welcome ceased, and taking the offered hand in her own tiny one, she looked up silently into that dear face, and went quietly, almost demurely on to their room.

But as soon as the door was opened, the exuberant gaiety of her pure young heart returned again, for she recollects, all at once, what she had intended to tell her mother the first thing, but which she had forgotten in the tumult of the welcome.

"Oh! mamma," she cried, eagerly, dragging her parent across the chamber, "do come and see. Such a beautiful moss-rose bud as I have

found, and you were looking on the bush for one in vain only yesterday, you know. Isn't it pretty?"

It was indeed exquisite, as delicate, pure and fresh as thyself, loveliest of daughters! And the mother said so mentally, as first gazing at the bud a moment, she stooped and kissed her darling.

The little girl followed her parent, talking pleasantly to her, as the latter crossed the room to put away her bonnet and shawl. She told how she had spent the early part of the morning dressing her doll and putting it to sleep; and all this she did so earnestly that one would have thought it the most serious of affairs. Then she told how, after this, she had thought it time to listen for her mamma's ring, and how, when it came, she knew it at once. But her voice, though cheerful, was not gay. She seemed to feel that gaiety would be out of place. Her mother, as much from the consciousness of this, as from the memory of the late interview, began silently to cry; but aware of the weakness of this, tried first to check her tears, and, failing, to hide them from her child.

But the latter soon detected them. Drawing her mother gently to a seat, and looking affectionately up, she said,

"Don't cry, mamma."

Don't cry! Oh! if ever you have, in your deep trouble, heard those touching words from the lips of a little daughter, her eyes bent on yours full of sympathy, and her lips quivering with sorrow because of your sorrow, then you know how it was that Alice suddenly clasped her child to her bosom, kissed her passionately again and again, and wept almost aloud. But if you have never had such a daughter, no words of mine can describe the scene.

At last Alice buried her face on her little one's shoulders. The child waited a while, and then quietly began, with her tiny hands, to turn her mother's head, saying, tenderly, "you ain't crying any more, are you, mamma? Don't cry, dear mamma."

And then there were fresh tears and renewed caresses, till gradually smiles returned to both faces. When Randolph came in to dinner, he found mother and daughter sitting lovingly together, the last nursing her doll quietly on her knee, and eagerly listening, with her little countenance full of concern, to her parent reading the ballad of the "Children in the Wood."

Let us turn from this innocent scene to one which was enacting, at that very hour, in the mansion of Mr. Vernon.

We are in the chamber of death. The carpet is the finest Axminster; the bed is gorgeous with hangings: but these cannot keep out death.

"Isabel," said a feeble voice, "are you there?"
"Yes, papa," and she came forward to the bedside.

"Raise me up."

She placed one arm under the pillow of the feeble old man, and, with her disengaged hand, put a second pillow beneath him, so that he could recline in a half sitting posture.

"I think I could sleep a little now, if you were to fan me. The air is very close. Lying down benumbs me."

A shade of concern passed over Isabel's face, for she knew the dread meaning of these signs; and though long expecting her father's death, it was a shock, come when it might.

Her first impulse was to call the servants. But her parent dropping almost immediately into a calm sleep, her present fears were relieved.

For some time the invalid slumbered quietly. But gradually he grew restless, murmuring low words which Isabel could not make out. Finally, his excitement increased, and he spoke louder.

"Alice," he said, "Alice, where are you? You prayed for me, did you, and I never prayed for you." He was evidently mingling his interview with Lily, with recollections of the childhood of Alice. "How much you look like your mother. And she, too, loved flowers. Ah! don't frown on me, angel, up in the clouds of heaven. 'Don't, don't leave me.'" The perspiration started from the brow of the sleeper. In a moment he cried, agonizingly, "she has passed into the gate of glory, and the avenging angel, with his flaming sword, warns me back."

A pang shot across the sharp features of Isabel, as if a poisoned arrow had been driven into her heart. She hesitated an instant, and then shook the sleeper.

"Father, father," she cried.

With a groan the old man opened his eyes, and met her wild look, though with vague and wandering gaze.

"Off, off," he gasped, "I do not know you. You are the fiend, I see your shape—"

"Father, father," almost shrieked Isabel, shaking him more violently.

This time he was more fully roused. He drew a deep breath and half moved a hand to his brow.

"Ah! I remember. You are one of my daughters. It is Alice, isn't it?"

The lips of Isabel were compressed till the blood almost started from them, and her face became, for an instant, perfectly livid. But the emotion, by whatever caused, soon passed off.

"It is I, Isabel: surely you know me."

"Oh!—ah!—yes—" He spoke slowly and vaguely, pausing between each word, and looking half doubtfully at her. "It is Isabel's voice. But you have made the room very dark. Why

don't they bring candles? And where is Alice? Ah! now I recollect, Alice isn't here—she is gone, gone, gone."

He spoke the last words despairingly, with a listless, dejected air; and, for a while, was silent. Isabel was torn by conflicting emotions. Thirst for revenge, and hatred to Alice warred within her against the remains of holier feelings; and alas! alas! they triumphed.

Very soon the invalid, who had closed his eyes languidly, opened them with a quick start. Grasping Isabel's arm, and speaking in a rapid voice, he said,

"Ring for a servant. Send for Alice and her child. I am dying and have not forgiven them: oh! what a sinner of sinners I have been. And send also for the lawyer to alter my will. I know now the meaning of the flaming sword, and the sad face of my angel-wife: how can I expect to be forgiven, if I forgive not?"

But Isabel never moved. Her face grew almost black, with the conflict within, as when storms

darken a mountain: but she neither answered, nor obeyed.

The old man gazed at her, at first in astonishment, and finally in horror. A terrible suspicion seized him, though not the true one. Desperately he clutched her arm, tighter than ever, and made a violent effort to draw her face down close to his.

"Oh! God," he cried, in a voice thick with terror, "she does not hear me, she does not understand my words. The dying, they say, often, try to speak, and cannot. Isabel, Isabel," he shouted, "can't you hear me? Stoop down lower!"

She obeyed him, but shook her head, as if his words were inarticulate.

"I am dying, it is too late," he cried, dropping her hand, "all is in vain. Oh! my God."

No words can describe the despairing accent of this appeal. Gradually his voice sank into indistinct mutterings: there was a convulsive shudder; and then a corpse lay stark and livid on the bed before Isabel. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

AN IDYL OF LAKE GEORGE.

BY CARRIE W. CRAPO.

Peterson's Magazine (1849-1892); Aug 1883; VOL. LXXXIV., No. 2.; American Periodicals pg. 119

AN IDYL OF LAKE GEORGE.

BY CARRIE W. CRAPO.

HULDA AINSWORTH folds her letter.

"Is it always my lot to be disappointed?" she sighs. "I will read again what the dear boy writes."

"CAMP RICHMOND, MAY 20th, 1876.

DEAREST HULDA:

You know, darling, how we have been longing for the summer, and my expected furlough. But, alas! cruel fate. Captain Osborn entered my tent, this morning, saying: 'Bad news, Rockwell. The General has put your furlough off a year. Elmer, who has not been away for six years, goes in your place. Awfully sorry for you, old boy. By Jove! it's hard on the little girl you are engaged to.' And he left me to grieve over my troubles.

Directly, Elmer came in for a smoke. 'What's up, old fellow?' he exclaimed: 'You look like a thunder-cloud. Is the storm about to descend?' I answered, and, I am afraid, a little crossly: 'The General has put off my furlough a year, on account of yours. Why the deuce do you go this summer? Hulda and I were to have been so happy, these last months of our engagement, and now—' He interrupted me. 'Tom, old friend,' he said, 'I did not know that my going would interfere with you. I will give it up for another year. I have no sweetheart. Go, and be happy with Miss Hulda; I will wait.'

Is he not generous? Decide for me, sweet. Shall we accept Ralph's noble sacrifice?

Your devoted but troubled lover,
Tom."

"Man-like, he leaves it for me to decide," said Hulda. "How can I be so cruel and selfish, and think only of our happiness? Of course, Major Elmer has no sweetheart, as my poor Tom has. I would like to know him. He must be a grand fellow."

The next day, she writes:

"If I had the wings of a dove, I would fly to thee, my own true heart. But it would not do to accept the generous sacrifice of your friend. My heart is broken, and the summer is ruined. Good-by to our moonlight vows. My own true love, farewell, farewell. Your own
HULDA."

Some weeks later, as the train steamed into

the forlorn little station at Glen's Falls, the Ainsworth family were seen descending upon the platform—baby, nurse, boxes, canoe, etc., etc.

A visitor at Lake George remembers the grand stampede for outside seats upon the coaches, that takes place at Glen's Falls. As usual, the crowd rushed frantically. Harry Ainsworth secured seats for all his party, calling: "This way, Hulda. I've got the boss coach."

"Me want to get up, too, and drive circus-horses, with Harry," cries Totty, at the top of her shrill little voice.

"Hush, Totty. There is no room for you, sweetheart," says Hulda. "Go inside, with Jane. Mammy said so, and she knows what is best for her little girl. Jane will tell you such pretty stories."

But Totty would not consent to this, but made the air hideous with shrieks, as she threw herself in the dust and began kicking.

"Look here, Tot," said Hulda, desiring to avoid a scene; "be a good girl, and you shall have my seat."

It was like Hulda, however, to be self-forgetful; she was always thinking of others' pleasure. So, evidently, thought one of the coaching party—a military-looking man, of middle age, with a handsome, good-natured face.

He addressed his neighbor, and said: "Can we not make room for the young lady on our seat? I think it quite wide enough for four."

So it was arranged; the driver snapped his whip; the horses started with a snort; the coach rattled down the plank road.

At every new beauty in the landscape, Harry burst into exclamations of rapture. "We go faster than on my bicycle: it is awfully jolly," he cried.

Hulda's neighbor was amused.

"It is many years since I have taken a bicycle ride," he said, turning towards Hulda, "and I am rather overgrown to begin again."

Directly they met some boys, who stood at the roadside, with water-lilies for sale.

"How beautiful," Hulda exclaims, as one of the boys flings up quite a number, that fall in a shower upon her.

"They are perfect," her neighbor continues, and gathering them in a neat bunch, he presents them with an elaborate bow, at the same

time showering nickels into the boys' uplifted hats.

"Pardon me," he said, soon after, "but did not your brother call you Hulda? It is a strange, but familiar name. My friend, that I left some weeks ago at Camp Richmond—"

"Camp Richmond?" interrupts Hulda, with a blush. "Oh! are you from Camp Richmond? Why did you not tell me before? We have passed the half-way house, and I have many questions to ask. You must know Mr. Rockwell, my friend, for I am told he is the favorite of the camp."

"That he is, and one of the best-hearted men in the world. It is from him that I have heard the name of Miss Hulda Ainsworth of Baltimore."

"You have heard him speak of me? I am Hulda Ainsworth, and you—"

"Ralph Elmer," he added, with a slight flush.

"Major Elmer! Oh, I am more than delighted to meet you," exclaimed Hulda. "Tom never wearies of singing your praises."

"How was Tom when he wrote last? Tell me some news of him. It was a great disappointment to him, not having a leave of absence. He should be here now. I am a fiend, not to have made him come in my place."

"You did all that you could, and I thank you for it," sighed Hulda. "But see, we have already reached Caldwell. May I present you to my mother?"

Mrs. Ainsworth was delighted to meet Major Elmer. She had heard her daughter speak of him as Tom's friend, she said; "would he not join their party? They would be glad to welcome so agreeable an acquisition."

Ralph bowed. "You honor me, madame; but I am to join my mother and sister here. Indeed, there they are. May the good fates bring us together soon. *Au revoir.*"

He hurried off, and the last seen of him, he was struggling in the embraces of an elderly lady and a gushing sister.

It was some days later when Mrs. Ainsworth said: "By the way, Hulda, what did Tom write?"

"That he hoped I would be kind to his friend, for his sake," answered the daughter. "That he rebelled against his fate. Something might come between our love, he feared. The summer was long, the moonlight dazzling, and I might be won away from him. In fact, he was awfully blue."

As she finished speaking, Hulda stroked a stray golden lock, smoothed her white dress, and rose to meet a military-looking gentleman who was coming towards them.

"Talk of angels, they are sure to appear," exclaimed Mrs. Ainsworth. "My daughter and I wondered if you had forgotten us."

"Quite the contrary, madame. My thoughts have often been with you. But I had not seen my mother and sister for six years, and we had many things to talk over."

"Mamma and I were talking of Tom as you joined us," said Hulda. "His last letter worries me, it is so unlike him. I never knew him to be blue before. He was pleased to hear that we had met you, however, and said we must be kind to you, for you were his friend."

Ralph coughed, looked away, and then said: "I, too, heard from Tom, this morning. He did seem to be out of tune. But such spells never last long, for he is the jolliest man in camp. Evenings, after mess, he entertains the crowd, playing on his banjo; we join in the choruses of the plantation songs."

"How charming," sighs Hulda. "If I could only have been there with my harp. Tom calls me esthetic Lady Hulda, because I am so fond of my harp."

"Hulda, my dear," says Mrs. Ainsworth, "you should tell Mr. Elmer the legend connected with your harp, since you have referred to it."

"Oh, do, Miss Ainsworth," urged Ralph. "But, first, may I introduce my mother and sister? I left them on the piazza, with some friends."

"How charming this is," exclaimed Mrs. Elmer, after Ralph's introduction. "My son tells me that we are in time to hear Miss Ainsworth's legend."

"Yes, do begin," said Ralph. "I am so curious to hear."

They made a picturesque group, under the trees: the ladies busy with their crewel-work.

"It was so very long ago," began Hulda, "that Aunt Cecil—who told me the legend—could not remember just when. But it was when this was an English province. At that time, an old man, with his daughter, Eunice, lived a secluded life among the hills, knowing no one. Eunice was as pure and innocent as the birds, her playmates. She loved her father with such devotion as only impulsive natures can give. He was her all, both father and mother. But she would often ask: 'Was her mother dead? If not, why did she leave them?' And her father would always answer: 'Be as you are, dear child—pure and guileless, wearing your mother's image in your heart. Some time I will tell you all.'

"Eunice was happy by temperament. She was like a wood-nymph, with her golden hair

falling around her. For seventeen years she had lived content, with only her father's love, when, one night, as they sat around the fire, her father said: 'I feel the time drawing near when I shall leave you, dear child. Ah! how can I tell you? Very soon I must cross to the other side.' 'We will go together, dear father,' answered Eunice, taking his hand and stroking it. 'As we go out into the cruel world, I will be your burden-bearer. When shall we start?' 'Oh! little heart,' he cried, gathering her in his arms, 'it is too late; the death-angel is calling me even now. Would God I could take you with me. I shall find rest; rest,' he added, weakly, 'which your world does not know. Find your mother, dear. She, too, needs rest; and tell her—' the words faltered, 'tell her—tell her that I forgive her, and will wait for her, above.' He sank down exhausted, after this, and fell asleep, as Eunice thought. So kissing him, she stole away for the night, to ponder over his strange words. Ah! innocent child, she little knew that already the Angel of Death had put his seal upon that beloved face.

"Eunice found this, her first grief, more than her heart could hold. But she said to herself: 'I have a mission in the world; it is to find my mother.' So, gathering together her few possessions, with a last look at the old house, she locked the door, ran down to the brook, dropped the key into its blue depths with a sigh, knelt at the grave to give it one last kiss, and was gone.

"Late at night she found herself in the city, weary, worn, and bewildered, clinging to her last friend—the harp. 'I am so tired,' she sighed, 'oh, is there no resting-place?' From door to door she wandered, until exhausted she sank upon a step. 'Oh! father,' she cried, 'come and take me. Why did I not die with you?' Her eyes closed softly. She fell asleep from sheer fatigue.

"An hour later, an old man, coming out, found her asleep on the door-step, her arms around her harp. 'Poor wee lassie,' he said, carrying her tenderly in the house. 'I wonder if she has no friends.'

"When Eunice opened her eyes, she asked herself: 'Where was she? Who were these kind people?' But the waking was only momentary. She closed her eyes and was off to sleep again. 'Mary,' said the old gentleman, to his wife, 'why not keep this child? It is strange, but she reminds me of our lost daughter. Often, when storms are raging, I wonder where she is. Something tells me that we will see her again, and that we will forgive her, though her husband never did. We have borne this cross so many

years together, let us now lay it down at this young girl's feet; she will bring some brightness into our weather-beaten lives, perhaps.' 'Robert, Robert, listen!' excitedly cried his wife; 'what, what is the girl saying in her sleep? 'Sweet and low, blow, blow, wind of the western ocean, blow.' It was our daughter's favorite lullaby. Yes, we will keep her.' So Eunice awoke to find loving eyes upon her. 'I want to be loved,' she said, laying her golden head upon the kind old lady's shoulder, when the latter told her of their wish. 'Oh, it is too good to be true. May I, indeed, stay with you?' 'Yes, and take the place of our daughter, that is lost,' sighed the elderly lady. 'But your name? What is it, little one?' 'Eunice. It was my mother's. She left me when a baby. Dear father,' sobbed the girl, 'never mentioned her until a few days ago, when he was dying, and he said: 'Find your mother; tell her I forgive her.' No. I cannot stay with you,' she cried, rising to her feet. 'I must go on, and on, until I find her; that will be my mission in the world.' 'What was your mother's last name?' gasped the old man. 'Was it Sands?' 'Yes; did you know my mother?' 'Know her? She was our daughter.' 'Your daughter? Then you are my—' 'Your grandfather,' he said. 'Oh, my little Eunice,' sobbed her grandmother, clasping the child in her arms, 'we will find your mother together. All wanderers return, at last: we must abide God's will.'

"Eunice told them of her early life, her father's death, and how she had sung to the angels to send her kind friends; for the Lord hath said: 'I will not forsake the fatherless.'

"My story is almost told," Hulda continued. "Some months after Eunice had found her grandparents, there was a great storm. The wind blew, and dashed the rain against the window, startling the old lady, and filling the air with strange sounds. 'Robert,' she said, at last, 'it may be nervousness, but I fancy that I see some one looking in the window; and then—why there it is again—a face, and so wan and white.' 'Nonsense,' was her husband's reply. 'It is nothing. You are only nervous. Still, my dear, as you wish it, I will go and see.' 'Let me go with you,' cried Eunice. They had reached the door, when they were attracted by a moan. 'What is this?' said Eunice, lifting a shawl from the ground. Beneath the shawl was a woman's form. The old man lifted it, and bore it into the house. The woman had been a beautiful one, evidently, but now the lines of suffering and care had clouded her once pure young face. As Eunice bent over her, she said: 'Don't come

near me. You are too good to touch me. Let me die as I have lived, neglected and forgotten. I wanted one more look at the old house. I remember it when I was an innocent, happy child. Oh, God, forgive me for what I have done! The grandmother had started at the first sight of that face, and now the voice removed every doubt. 'She is our daughter,' she cried. 'Our Eunice, come home to die.' 'Mother, father,' she sobbed, 'will you forgive me? Let me be your child again, just for to-night?'

"The mother burst into tears. Her heart took back again her child as of old. But the wanderer was not long for earth. Eunice devoted herself to her dying mother, comforting her by telling her of her husband's forgiveness. 'And I was so untrue to him,' murmured the repentant wife. 'Oh, my little golden-haired baby, with your father's eyes of blue, to think that I, your mother, should have deserted you! Call mother and father. Bring me my dear old harp. Let me touch its strings once more before I die.'

Eunice gave the harp into her trembling hands. The old couple gathered near. The daylight was fading. The last sunbeam rested for a moment upon the dying face, touched lightly the form of the kneeling girl, and was gone. Then the feeble voice sang out: 'Safe in the arms of Jesus, safely my soul shall rest. Shall rest,' she murmured, falling back.

"Ever afterward the harp became sacred to Eunice, who imagined her mother's soul dwelt in it.

"Eunice, after the death of her grandparents, married a true and noble man, that loved her. He was our ancestor," concluded Hulda, "and in his last will and testament, left directions that the much-valued harp should descend to the blonde daughter of every family. So it is that I now have it."

There was a chorus of "Bravo, bravo," and several added: "Now show us the harp."

"Let me propose a scheme," said Major Elmer, who had been intensely interested during Hulda's recital. "It is that we visit Paradise Bay, to-morrow, by moonlight; and that Miss Ainsworth will bring her harp. My sister will bring her guitar, while I make the night hideous with my banjo. What do you all say?"

"Oh, it will be charming!" they all cried.

None who were of that party ever forgot Hulda as she looked that night, when she sang "Douglas, Douglas, tender and true," her white fingers lingering over the harp-strings.

"I have enjoyed this evening more than any in my life," said Elmer, as he shook hands with Hulda, at parting. There was a fondness in his

voice and look, that disturbed as well as pleased her.

"Yes, if Tom had only been with us," she replied.

The summer months were drawing to a close. It was the last week of the Ainsworths' stay. The Elmers were going, in a few days.

Ralph had seen more and more of Hulda: too much, alas! for his peace; and found how hard this parting would be. He had tried, with manly heroism, to be true to his friend and himself. It had always been his favorite maxim: "First to thine own self be true, then it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst be false to no man." Was he, after all, false to Tom? Tom, who had trusted him? No, he would not speak. If he could only tell Hulda of his love, it would be a relief. But he must leave her, and bury his secret deep in his soul; nothing else could be honorable.

It was the evening of the closing hop. Hulda was in a fever of excitement. She would enjoy to its fullest extent this last evening with him, the friend she had learned to love, innocently, unconsciously. When he was gone, she would think no more of him. Poor Tom! Never would she be untrue to him. But the pity of it all.

She lingered longer than usual over her toilet, that evening. It was Ralph's favorite dress that she wore: a pale-blue nun's-veiling. He had told her that she resembled, in it, one of the clouds fallen from heaven. "How good of him to send me my favorite flowers," she exclaimed, lifting the fair white lilies. "To row three miles, before breakfast, too, to gather these for me. There," she said, placing them on her left side, "you must cover the beatings of this treacherous heart."

"How pretty 'ou is; me want to kiss 'ou," cries Totty's little voice, as the child came in.

"You love me, don't you, Tot?" says Hulda, taking the child in her arms.

"Yes, me does."

Gelman's perfect music was filling the room with the strains of the Cagliostro Waltz, as the Ainsworth party entered.

"This is our waltz, Miss Ainsworth," said Major Elmer, coming up eagerly; and Hulda finds herself whirled off in his strong arms.

"You are looking very lovely," he said, bending over her, with a flushed face.

"If I am, it is your lilies that make me so," she added, archly.

They had left the crowded room after the waltz, and were now enjoying the coolness outside.

"See," Hulda cried, "there is a flotilla-party. How beautiful the colored lights look, dancing over the water!"

"This is our last evening together," said

Ralph. "Would you not like to have one more moonlight row?"

"Yes," said Hulda; "it will be our last row; and," as if seeking for an excuse, "it is too warm for dancing."

The harvest moon was full. The flotilla-party were now out of sight. But as Ralph's boat glided through the golden path of light, they could hear the distant notes of "Forever and forever," echoing back from the boats.

"Ah! yes," sighed Hulda, "it will soon be 'forever and forever.'" She hardly knew what she said, her heart was so full. "It will all be of the past."

"Oh, Hulda—forgive me for calling you so," murmured Ralph. "Don't number me among the things of the past. Let me share a little of your present. The future," he continued, "holds no pleasures for me. From to-night, I live in the past. But you, you have a glorious future opening before you. Tom will make you a worthy and a loving husband. May you both be happy."

"And so, I hope, will you be," smiled Hulda, returning to herself. "You deserve a good wife. I know you will find her." Then she wondered, "like whom will his wife be?" and hated her.

"I shall never marry," said Ralph.

It was enough. She knew he loved her; she shuddered, drawing her white cloak around her. "It is growing damp, and late," she said, "we must return before they miss us." For she could not trust herself any longer, after this.

"We will," he said; "but sing again; as you did in Paradise Bay—'Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.' It is for the last time."

Her voice lingered over the words "I love you, Douglas, tender and true." Their eyes met. One last lingering look. Their boat had reached the shore. He passionately kissed her hand, and was gone.

The music had ceased; the piazzas were deserted; she was left alone. The next day the party broke up. Major Elmer had left before Hulda came down. He had been true to his maxim. He had been false to no man: for he had been true to himself.

Six years, freighted with their joys and woes, had come and gone, when Hulda Rockwell, now a widow, found herself again at Lake George. Tom had been dead nearly three years. She has suffered much, and in more ways than one; but she is still beautiful, as she stands, to-day, in the golden light, leaning on the rails of a little bridge, where she had often been, on her former visit. Her dress is black, but she is no longer in mourning; she wears black mitts; and a white muslin fichu relieves the sombre color of her gown. The years have but added womanliness to her beauty, though they have given a touch of sadness to her face.

She has come here because she knows that Major Elmer is to arrive, to-day; and she cannot bear to be at the hotel when the coach comes in; she will feel that all eyes will be upon her, whether they are or not. She is thinking: "he ought to be there by this time; will he come here to seek me?" Suddenly her little pet dog barks. She looks quickly around, and Ralph Elmer is at her side.

Time has dealt kindly with him, also. Except for a few silver hairs, and a look of patient self-denial, he is the same as of old. But when he sees Hulda, his whole face brightens, and he is ten years younger.

"Darling," he exclaims, hurrying up, "at last, at last. After all these years of waiting, you will be mine, will you not? That is what I meant when I asked if I might follow you here. Oh!" as she fell into his arms, "this is worth waiting for, even as Jacob waited for Rebecca."

BÉBÉ.

BY FANNIE HODGSON BURNETT.

CHAPTER I.

It was a wonderful structure in the eyes of Floxham, and it had been an object of deep, if not always appreciative interest from the first.

When the foundation was being dug, the juvenile members of the lower strata of Floxham society had been wont to gather round the workman, to gaze, open-mouthed, at "th' big pit as th' men wur diggin' to put Mester Norford's new house i'" and, as the work advanced, and the building grew and developed into hinting at its future imposing appearance, older people wakened from the apathy with which they had previously regarded it, and indulged in remarks and criticism.

"Has tha seen that theor now house o' Norford's?" men would ask each other, as they enjoyed their evening lounge over palings and garden gates.

"Aye, to be sure," would be the answer.

After this generally came a significant pause, and then a half-contemptuous, half-amused laugh.

"Eh! he's a rare chap, is Norford," usually came next. "He's a gaudy 'un, an' theer'll be rare doins i' th' new place when it's finished." And the chuckle which followed was just a shade suggestive of secret delight in the "rare doins" in question. In truth Floxham was not celebrated for its high standard of morality; but even Floxham felt some slight scruples concerning the social peculiarities of its great man. Respectable people shuddered, and held themselves aloof from him openly, and those who hovered between the shady and respectable, shrugged their shoulders, or laughed, to suit the society they were in when the man's name chanced to be mentioned.

"Norford," or "Jem Norford," Floxham and the surrounding country called him; there was no need of a ceremonious prefix. He was not the kind of a man to demand one, and even if he had demanded it, he was not likely to get it. Twenty-five years before the foundation of the new house was dug, a ragged boy of ten had crept into the foundry which was Floxham's pulse, and had staggered and fallen in an apparently perishing condition, just within the circle of kindly warmth thrown out by the furnace-fires. It was midnight, but this was one of the

pushing seasons during which the pulse throbbed day and night, and so the fainting lad had been found, and found barely in time to save life. He would say nothing for himself, but that he had been "on tramp" for weeks, and that he had eaten "next to nowt fur three days, and th' cold had froze th' heart out o' him," and the glow of the furnace-fires had attracted him to come in. From his reticence they gathered that he was a run-away, but his pinched, wan face, and a certain dogged courage in his answers, touched the hearts of the men who found him, and they shared their supper with him, let him sleep in a warm corner, and the next morning presented him to the master as a candidate for work.

Since that night he had rarely been absent a day from the place. He had labored early and late, and had grumbled at no task given him to perform. The shrewd, bold child had become a shrewd, bold man; and as the years went by he had been promoted from post to post, and had saved and managed until, by a sharp, daring stroke, he had won his present position, and become master of his trade, master of the great foundry, and so master of Floxham's very self, and the daily bread she ate.

"I said I'd do it, an' I've done it," he said to the first man who congratulated him, on the first day of his accession to his full powers. "I ran away from the work-house my father drunk me into, when I was ten years old, an' I ran away because work-house fare didn't suit me; an' I knew therero was a place for me in th' world somewhere, if I'd work sharp enough for it. I tramped from Kent to Lancashire, an' starved, and froze, an' well-nigh broke down; but when I found a place to set my foot in, I set it there, an' kept it therero, an' I held my word to what I meant to do. I wish I knew where the chaps were as give me my first lift; they should have such a spree to-night as they wouldn't get over in a week;" and he laughed a queer, short laugh which rather puzzled his hearer. "There's only two on 'em left in th' foundry," he added, after a breath's pause. "It's twenty years since, an' chaps die an' scatter in twenty years," and he turned away suddenly, without saying more.

He behaved well enough to his work-people, and gave them all a fair chance. "These hands of Jem Norford's will give him trouble some-

on

day," other foundry-owners used to say; but the prophesy never came true; and once, when there was a strike in the country, Jem Norford marched straight into his foundry one morning, and called his hands together, and faced them with the blunt command, "Them as I've done fair by, and as means to do fair by me, let 'em step into line." There was not a laggard among them, and there was not one of them who suffered through his faith; for Jem Norford armed every man, and armed himself, and warned the "Union" fairly by a unique notice posted on walls and fences.

"The chap that plays tricks on Jem Norford's men, let him look out. There's six barrels to a man, and a bullet to each barrel, night and day; and there's twelve to Jem Norford, and the will to use them without stopping to ask questions."

(Signed) JEM NORFORD."

And yet, despite defiant courage, and defiant justice, he was a bad fellow—Jem Norford.

"He's a plague-spot on the place, that fellow Norford," said the Squire, "and he's all the worse because he's an honest rascal. If he was a cheat, or a liar, or a bully, Floxham would be better for it. But as it is, he riots and outrages all social laws, and lives a life to make decent people quake, and yet, somehow, hurts no one but himself; and only appears to the unthinking, uncultivated people to be a reckless fellow, going to the devil in his own way, and because he chooses."

When the new house was built, respectable Floxham fairly shook in its shoes. Jem Norford never forced himself upon them. They did not want him, and he did not want them. He had a society of his own, and he confined himself to it. But hitherto he had lived in such a way as compelled him to leave Floxham when he was inclined to riot and evil-doing. Now, however, he would have room and power to entertain his associates as he chose. Every order of sinner would find his way to the quiet village, and enjoy himself at Norford's expense. The great house was built to contain visitors, and no money was to be spared upon its appointments.

"I'm going to enjoy myself in my own way, lads," Norford announced, loudly.

Loads of furniture were brought from London, and a small army of proficients were at work continually. When it was finished, there would not be such another place in the whole country. London sent gardeners, also, and the grounds and conservatories were to be wonders.

"I'm going to have it ship-shape," said Jem,

with pardonable complacency. "An' I'm not such a fool as to think I can manage it myself. Let them do it as knows how. Iron's my trade, and silks and satins, and velvets, is theirs. I can better afford to pay than to meddle."

So he left everything in the hands of the best firms, only keeping a sharp eye on results, and taking care that there should be no loitering in the work. He dropped into the place every few days, and walked through the long, luxurious rooms, as if from a business-like sense of duty, and with the rueful air of a man who was far from feeling at home. The thick carpets, refusing to give back an echo to his tread, irritated him with their soundless softness. He was used to the clatter of metal, the whirr of machinery, and the roar of fires. His life had been spent in a kind of harmless Inferno, and the delicate colors and rich, subdued lights were too novel to be entirely pleasant. Perhaps more than all, the faces in the pictures on his walls troubled him, the silent faces looking down at him with beautiful human eyes, whose beauty was still something more than human. Sometimes he tried to avoid answering their gaze, but oftener they forced him to look up, and then he would pause a moment, and rub his big hand confusedly over his rough, black hair, and pass on, feeling ill at ease.

"Seem to watch a fellow so, somehow," he would mutter.

One day he was absent from the foundry, and the next he drove up the lane before the new house, with a companion, whom he assisted to descend from the light carriage. She was a woman, such as Floxham had never seen before; a woman with a fair face and large, languid eyes, and a proud air. Her dress was faultless; a dress to deceive one into fancying that its cost was a mere nothing, and yet to hold one wondering at its perfection of taste. She gave her hand to Jem Norford, as if he had been her servant, and she walked through the broad sweep of gravel as if the things, which were so new to him, were a story old enough to be monotonous to her. She walked through room after room, glancing here and there as if it were an effort to her not to appear wholly indifferent.

"Do you like it, Cicely?" Norford asked, after watching her askant for awhile. "Come, say something. You know it was you I wanted to please."

She smiled faintly, and then one saw that her beauty would grow with one's knowledge of it; for, though a little cold, the smile had a certain gentleness.

"You are very good," she answered. "And

I do like it. It is not—" Then, correcting herself, hastily, "Is it your own taste?"

Jem Norford laughed.

"No," said he, "not a bit of it. I knew better than that. My taste wouldn't have been your style, Cicely; and I tell you it was you I wanted to please most; so, I gave the thing into proper hands, an' let 'em know I was willing to pay for good work."

"It was an excellent plan," she remarked, quietly. "I wish every man I know had as much good sense."

"Then it's better than Tom Wade's place?" suggested Jem.

"Wade is a fool!" flushing slightly; "and a coarse one. He is one of the men I hate."

Jem Norford felt rather astonished, and showed as much.

"Why?" he asked.

Her answer was given somewhat impatiently.

"He has had a life full of opportunities, and he has thrown them all away, just because he is a weak simpleton, with coarse instincts. Pouf! Why should we speak of him?" cooling contemptuously. "Suppose you show me your flowers."

There were flowers in abundance to show. The grounds had been laid out as soon as the foundation was dug, and the gardeners had been at work constantly.

They wandered about until the sun set, and then they returned to the house.

"It is a pretty place," said Cicely, taking a last look, as she turned upon the threshold, and she said the words quite softly.

They were standing together, at one of the windows, a few minutes later, when they both became conscious of the presence of a small figure on the terrace, into which the window opened. It stood only a couple of feet from them, and was the figure of a child of five or six, who, bending her closely-curved head, busied herself with something that she held gathered up in her short apron.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Jem, in surprise. "I'm hanged if it isn't a young one."

"Don't frighten her," said Cicely, hurriedly. "Open the window! What is she doing?"

Jem opened the window, and at the sound, the child looked up, and they saw what she was doing. Her apron was full of roses, and it was plain she had just gathered them.

"I say, youngster," said Norford, with good-natured roughness, "who gave you those?" pointing to the flowers.

"Don't frighten her," said Cicely, again.

But she did not seem frightened, though she

was a small child, even for five or six, and a frail bit of a creature, too. She had round, soft eyes, which she fixed upon Jem Norford, in a fearless calm.

"I took them, Monsieur," she said: "I am Bébé."

Jem turned a little awkwardly to his companion.

"What's the matter with her?" he asked. "She don't belong to Lancashire."

There was a kind of strained attention in the woman's face, as she answered him.

"No," she said. "She's French. Hush!"

She bent forward, and held out both her hands.

"Come here," she said, to the child.

It came, without hesitation, only keeping its eyes fixed on her face.

Jem Norford stood by, and looked on, while the woman bent down to bring herself upon a level with the child.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"Here," was the reply. "I am Bébé," and she tucked a stray rose into the corner of her apron.

Then a light flashed upon Jem Norton.

"I'll tell you where she comes from," he broke out. "She belongs to the people at the lodge. The man who came to ask about the place, said there was a child, but not their own."

The child nodded, and smiled at him.

"Yes, I am Bébé, and I live here," she said, "in Monsieur's garden."

Then she looked up at the pale face bending over her. All at once, it seemed to Norford to have become a very pale face, indeed, and haggard, in spite of its beauty. And she spoke to it in a soft, hushed voice.

"Madame is—is *tres belle*," she said. "Madame is *tres belle*," and she touched the fair cheek with her little hand.

The woman quite started.

"Kiss me," she said, suddenly. "Kiss me—and go away."

When the child lifted her lips to bestow her caress, it was returned with a fervor almost impassioned, and then Cicely gave her a little push.

"There, take your roses home," she said. "It is getting dark."

Bébé turned away in smiling content, and trotted off into the twilight.

It was all over in a few minutes, and they were standing alone together, and Jem was conscious that his companion shook from head to foot, with a nervous tremor.

"What is the matter?" he asked, anxiously.

"Cice, what is it?"

She had been watching the small figure out of sight, and she turned to him with a heavy breath.

"It is nothing," she answered. "It is nothing, now. Only," with a piteous effort at a laugh, "the child there is a ghost."

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE the last finishing touch was given to the great house, its master had drifted into a most amiable intimacy with Bébé. A certain degree of good-fellowship was established between them. It may have been that Jem Norford was a child-lover by nature, but if this was the case, the sentiment had never developed itself on any previous occasion. He knew nothing of children and their ways, and had possibly scarcely spoken to a child in his life; but somehow he managed to advance steadily in the esteem of this little one. He appeared on the threshold of the lodge a few days after his first brief interview with Bébé, and finding that young person sitting on the step, engaged in the manufacture of a daisy-chain, intended for the personal adornment of her cat, he stopped short, and looked down at her, feeling somewhat curious, and, at the same time, somewhat abashed at her sage demeanor. In fact, it was Bébé he had come to see, though he could not have told why. It had just occurred to him, as he entered the gates, that he should like to see "the youngster," and so he turned in. But, having arrived at this point, he did not find it easy to get further. He would have felt less embarrassed, perhaps, if the child had belonged to the ordinary, round, rosy, and cherubic order. But she did not. She was small, and frail, and pale, and a certain seriousness seemed to brood upon her little face. She looked too old for her age, and too sedate; even her attire had a style of its own, its principal feature being the quaint black blouse and white cap, worn by so many of the French working classes. The white cap fitting round her face, gave her a more serious air still, almost the air of an infantine nun who had abjured the world.

"I say," said Jem, at last, "how are you?"

She recognized him at once, he saw. She dropped her daisy-chain.

"Where is the beautiful Mademoiselle?" she asked.

"She's a very long way from here," replied Jem, awkwardly.

Bébé pointed up the gravel-walk.

"Will she not live there, with Monsieur—in the big house?"

Jem shifted his feet uneasily, and reddened.

"No," he said, "she won't. But she'll come there. She's a friend of mine. But, I say," hastily, "how are you?"

Bébé sighed, and returned to her daisies.

"I have the bad, bad head, this morning," she answered. "It aches. I wish Mademoiselle had come with you."

"Why?" asked Jem.

"She is good," said Bébé. "She is beautiful. Her hands are soft, and she kissed me."

There was a pause after this, in which Jem found himself somewhat ignored. But as he waited, a brilliant idea occurred to him. He put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a bright, new shilling.

"See here, little 'un," he said, "here's something to buy snaps with—ginger."

Then Bébé was plainly moved. It was such a new shilling, so bright and alluring. She glanced at it, and then at Jem, and rose, and called to some one in the house in a shrill, little voice,

"Julie! Julie!"

The Julie in question, who was a plump young French woman, and no other than the gate-keeper's wife, appeared upon the spot as soon as she could make her way from the back part of the house, and seeing Norford, overwhelmed him with pretty apologies for keeping him waiting. She had been cutting vegetables for her soup, and had not seen or heard Monsieur, she said.

"But I haven't been waiting," said Norford. "I didn't want anything. I was talking to—what's her name? What is her name?"

"We have always called her Bébé," replied the woman. "She does not know any other name, but," dropping her voice, abruptly, "she was baptized, of course, and the name I gave her was Cecilie."

"Cecilie," said Norford. "That's pretty near Cicely, by Jove. She's not your's, is she?"

No, she was not their's, but like their own, nevertheless. She had no parents, and was all alone in the world; and they had cared for her from the first. Would Monsieur be seated?

No, Monsieur would not. He was on his way to take a turn through the house. And then, with a clumsy off-handedness, he displayed the new shilling.

"I've been telling her she could buy snaps with that," he said. "She's a queer little fish. Let her spend it, and let her run about the place, and do what she pleases. She won't hurt nothing. Good-day, ma'am."

He touched his hat, and strode away; but before he had taken many steps, he heard patter feet, and a small hand plucked at his coat. It

was Bébé, and she raised herself upon her two tips with an unmistakable meaning. Two or three seconds elapsed before Norford summoned courage to bend down; and having done so, he lifted his head, with a very red face.

"You're a queer fish," he said. "Good-by, young 'un, an' much obligeed," and he walked away, flushed and hurried.

This was the beginning of the acquaintance, and the rapidity and steadiness of its progress was wonderful.

The time came when Norford never passed the lodge without stopping to exchange a word with the child, or hand her some trifle—a flaming picture-book, or a toy, or a toothsome token of friendly feeling, all of which Bébé received with demonstrations of gratitude. She was never very talkative, but Norford found her a peculiarly attractive companion. She got into the habit of following him about the house and grounds like a dog. She seemed at least to consider him her own personal property, and people became accustomed to the sight of Jem Norford roaming about the place with the small figure by his side, or trotting at his heels composedly.

"A curious freak!" observers remarked.

"Thank Heaven, it is not a bad one!" added the Squire, devoutly.

It was a nondescript crowd enough, whose carriages rolled up the drive on the night of Jem Norford's house-warming. There were handsome faces and haggard ones; coarse faces and singularly refined ones. There were men and women who were both young and old; but there was not a Floxhamite among them, and there was not a face which had not a suggestion of hardness in its lines, whether it was fair or fated. The men were well-dressed men, and the women carried their silks, and velvet, and lace, as if they were used to their splendor. The handsomest woman of all was the latest arrival. A small, dark Brougham, whose servants wore the simplest of liveries, drove up at the eleventh hour, and Jem Norford himself appeared on the spot to meet its occupant. A sweet, cold face, and a blaze of diamonds, shone out upon him from the darkness into the light, and then the woman, ascending the steps, stood smiling faintly at the greeting of her host.

"By Jove, Cicely!" he exclaimed. "How well you look!"

"Well?" she answered. "Or handsome? Which is it?"

"It's handsome," he confessed, "now I come to look at you again. It's not well. You're white, by Jove—under—"

"Under the rouge," she ended for him, with

a laugh. "Don't be afraid to speak the truth to me, Jem, but don't tell the other women."

She laid her hand lightly upon his arm, and he led her forward. As they passed the half-opened door of one of the rooms, she started back, and uttered an exclamation.

"What frightened you?" asked Jem. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"There is that child again!" she answered. "What is it doing here? It put its head out of the door, and startled me."

And sure enough, the door was pushed open, slowly, to its full width, and Bébé stood upon the threshold, wide-eyed, black-bloused, white-capped, and grave as usual.

Jem laughed, half-confusedly.

"Halloo!" he said. "I'd forgotten her in the row and bustle. She's a friend of mine by this time, Cicely. We're good friends, me and Bébé. Ain't we, youngster? I told the lodge-keeper to bring her up to the house, an' let her see the finery on the quiet. I say, shrimp, how do you like it?"

But Cicely hurried him past the child, in spite of his inclination to stop.

"Never mind stopping to talk to her," she said. "You will be missed, and the child looks half-frightened. Children don't always like to be noticed by strangers."

"But I'm not a stranger to her," returned Jem, interested in the subject, as Cicely had never seen him interested in anything before.

"She's not afraid of me, by George! No more than I'm afraid of her. Fact is," sheepishly, and dropping his voice. "Fact is, I don't know but what I am a bit afraid of her now an' then. I don't know much about youngsters, but I don't fancy as she's like the most on 'em. Danged if she doesn't say her prayers night an' mornin', an' sing hymn-tunes as well; an'—an'—his laugh quite an unsteady affair. "One day she asked me who I said mine to. It upset me a bit, you see, seein' as she looked so innocent about it, an' I didn't know what to say."

"What did you say?" asked Cicely.

"Told her as I didn't have no one to say 'em to; an' then— We'll, hanged if she didn't tell me I'd better say 'em to her, and wanted me to kneel down an' say 'em then an' there. I don't know how I should have got out of it, if it hadn't have been for her mother."

"Then she has a mother?"

"A kind of one," said Jem. "Her own mother's dead, but the woman as keeps her is a good soul, though she is French, and has a surfin' religion."

Men and women glanced at the two as they

entered the room, some smilingly, some angrily, some with bold and ready admiration. But no sign of any feeling displayed itself in the cold face at Norford's side. Jem himself looked for a moment both awkward and conscious. His skin reddened, and he made a desperate effort to appear at ease. Ignorant as he was, he knew just how contemptuously two or three pairs of coldly smiling eyes were fixed on him. He quite understood the half sneer, cleverly uttered under breath by the men who spent his money, and the women who accepted his hospitality, and laughed at him. He was sharp enough to know they did laugh, and that even the most honest of them had their jest at his expense. But not Cicely—not Cicely, who made no professions, and no graceful speeches, and who was cold and bitter when she chose, without pretence. No man had ever dared to sneer at him in Cicely's presence, after the first had tried it.

"Don't say such things as that to me," she had said, fixing her icy glance upon him. "It does not suit me to hear them. He is not a liar, and he is not a braggart coward. His life is bad and riotous, but you know there are men who would scarcely find it safe to compare records with him. As for me, shall I tell you that there have been moments when I have been tempted to respect him, by comparison? No one else has so tempted me."

Perhaps her pride and beauty acted as a slight restraint upon the less refined of the company, and held them in check. The outward demeanor of the guests would possibly have surprised respectable Floxhamites, who rather expected that the Norford festivities would be, after a manner, Bacchanalian orgies, especially after supper.

The gayety was at its height, and Cicely was looking on with a wearied air, when she felt something touch her elbow timidly, and, turning round, she saw that a strange element had introduced itself among them, the most incongruous of all elements in such an assemblage—the child, Bébé, who stood looking up into her face with earnest admiration and evident confidence. Of course, the rest saw her, too, the next moment; and at the discovery of the quaint, childish figure, a shout of loud laughter broke forth.

But Cicely did not laugh. There was in her face a suggestion of uncontrollable emotion, a kind of startled pain and surprise.

"How has she found her way into the room?" she said, hurriedly, to Norford. "She has no right here. Send her away. She ought to be in bed. What do her people mean?"

"No, don't send her away," cried one of the

men. "Make her talk! Let her stay! This is a new sensation."

"Send her away!" commanded Cicely, in an impatient undertone.

But Bébé was too sure of her position in the household. Her familiarity with its master had accustomed her to its splendor, and she was not afraid of the glitter and many faces.

Her sweet treble piped out clear and distinctly above the amused clamor.

"I came to find Mademoiselle," she said. "The pretty Mademoiselle. I saw her."

Norford laughed in open delight at the boldness of his protégé.

"That's her, all over!" he said. "She never forgets nothin'. She's took a fancy to you, Cicely, that's plain."

"I wanted to see Mademoiselle," announced Bébé again. "She is beautiful, and the pretty beads on her neck shine so! I know who Mademoiselle is," she added, nodding her head confidently.

"Who?" asked Norford, tossing her a bunch of grapes. "Let's hear."

"I know!" with another nod. "She is the sister of Monsieur. His sister."

A slight laugh broke out round the table, and died out awkwardly. A scarlet flush started to Cicely's cheek, and then paled.

"She is Monsieur's sister," repeated the child. "She came to see Monsieur's house, and she kissed me. And Monsieur said her name was Cicelie. I know. Mademoiselle, why do you not kiss me again?"

Cicely bent and touched her cheek lightly with her lips. Bébé put both hands upon her silken lap, and looked up at her, reassured.

"May I stay?" she asked. "If I may, I will sing for you. I sing for Monsieur often."

A sort of hush fell upon the company. The novelty of the situation impressed them, and something in the look of the two faces at the head of the table.

"Don't let her!" said Jem, in sudden protest. "She sings them things they sing in churches an'" with a glance round which defied even the suggestion of a sneer—"this isn't a church."

Cicely answered him with a slow, bitter smile.

"Nay, don't stop her!" she said. "It won't hurt us, nor her, thank Heaven! Let her think well of us, if she will. Sing your hymn, Bébé—even to us."

Bébé was quite ready. It was her habit to sing to Jem, and she knew no fear. She had a staid fancy that she must pay her fee of admission to this enchanted land; and so, holding her

grapes in her blouse, and fixing her gaze on Cicely, she sang, with the voice of a bird, while Jem played nervously with the handle of his knife, and Cicely leaned her head upon her hand, and listened.

O, Dieu ! ma bouche balborette,
Ce nom, des anges redouté,
Un enfant même est écouté
Dans le choeur qui te glorifie.

On dit quo c'est toi qui produis
Les fleurs dont le jardin se pare,
Et quo sans toi, toujours avare
Le verger n'aurait point de puits.

Donne aux malades le santé
Au mendicant le pain quo'il pleure
A l'orphelin une de meure
Au prisonnier la liberté.

Her hymn finished, Bébé turned her attention to her grapes, feeling that she had done all that could be required of her. She was a practical little body, upon the whole, with a simple appreciation of the good things of life. She turned naturally to Jem, and leaned against his knee, enjoying her prize at her leisure, and answering his forced smiles with complacence.

The men and women who had listened to her song, sat in uneasy silence for a few moments. There may have been those among them who felt some long, untouched cord thrill anew and strongly, but they were not prone to emotional display; and, after a brief and rather trying pause, laughter and jest struggled to the surface, and reigned predominant. It is easier to laugh than to weep—always.

When reaction had fully set in, Bébé was half-forgotten, save by Norford, who had, in truth, understood nothing of her innocent piping, save its subtle thrill and purity.

"I don't know what it means," he had said, in a low voice, to Cicely. "I never do, unless she tells me in her way; but I know it goes through a chap somehow."

Almost before the echo died out in the room, Cicely's chair was empty. She rose silently, and was gone before any one but Norford was aware of her intention.

Jem stood staunchly by his protégé, and let her amuse herself as she would, until she was tired. It did not take long to tire her. In course of half an hour there was a significant silence for a few minutes, and then the white cap nodded forward until it rested on Jem's knee, and Bébé was asleep. Jem stooped gravely, and picked her up. He carried her out of the room, and into the servant's hall, to the great alarm and confusion of the bewildered Julie.

"Sainted mother!" exclaimed the latter. "I left the child asleep hours ago, on the hearth-

rug, in the housekeeper's room. Mon Dieu! how could such a calamity have come about? The wicked one must have awakened and strayed away. Pardon, Monsieur, a thousand pardons."

"She's done no harm," remarked Norford. "Put her to bed in one of the rooms. Don't carry her out into the night air;" and he delivered her over, with tender care and deliberateness.

Then he went in search of Cicely. But she was not in the house, and it was not until he went out into the grounds that he found her—a white figure, crouching in the darkness and dew, upon a rustic seat, beneath a tree.

She raised herself at his approach, shivering and impatient.

"There was no need to come," she said. "I came here to be alone."

"It's too cold for you, Cicely," he ventured.

"Yes, it's cold," she answered. "I wish it was Death's cold," she added, through her closed teeth.

Feeling himself unable to cope with her mood, Norford remained silent. He was something unstrung himself, also. The noise and laughter inside jarred upon him. He wished it was all over, and his guests had left him. Money and power had not brought him all he had fancied they would bring. Grandeur, in prospective, had been much pleasanter than its reality. After all, what did these "chaps" inside care for him, when his wine was drunk, and his suppers were things of the past. Somehow, "and a queer crank it was," as he put it mentally, the child that lay asleep in one of his luxurious rooms, had moved him to a vague feeling of disgust with his life and belongings.

"Cicely," he said, at last, slowly, and as if questioning himself even as he spoke, "seems to me as we're both out of sorts with things in the same way."

She looked up at him, sad and weariedly. She understood him as few women would have done. They were very far apart, and yet they were akin, in a certain sense, after all.

"No," she answered, "not quite in the same way! Mine's a bitterer way than your's, Jem; it's a woman's way."

"Well," admitted Jem, "happen it is harder lines for a woman; but I don't know," and he plucked uneasily at the twigs upon the tree's trunk, and crushed the leaves in his hand.

"You see," he added, slowly still, "Life's life an'—seems like when it's over—it's done with—such lives as ours. It's queer a chap doesn't feel that way about—such as her," nodding his head toward the house.

There was a pause of a few seconds, and then,

CHAPTER III.

with a sudden movement, the woman flung herself into her former position, and burst into fierce weeping.

"Such as she!" she cried. "A child—a child who prays, and sings hymns. And once—once it was so with me. And I might strive, and pray, and grovel in the dust, and I could not bring it back, for it is lost forever, forever! Oh, my God! If there is a God to hear me, crush my life out now, and let that be the end."

It was a terrible thing to see—this agony of despair, which, even in its mildest depths, rebelled against itself. Mere life must have been such a bliss to this creature once; and now, only to know that death would come swiftly, and be the very end!

Even Jem Norford felt a tremor seize him.

"Don't, Cicely," he said. "Don't say it, my girl—don't."

"See," clenching her hand, and shaking from head to foot, "that child's song dragged me to the gates of Hell. And the name she called me—the old name. I thought I should never hear it again. The only man I ever loved used to call me Cecilié—Cecilié; and he was a villain. And to hear it from such lips as hers! Cecilié—Cecilié, after all these years!"

"The man you loved?" said Norford.

"He was a Frenchman, and I am a French woman. I had almost forgotten it. France seems so far away—as far away as the rest."

For a few minutes she seemed to forget herself, and Norford stood by in helpless silence. Rough and untutored he might be, but not awkward enough to trouble her with further questioning. He had a fancy that she "needed to be let alone," and so he waited. At last she rose.

"I won't go back to the house," she said. "Let them think what they choose. I want purer air, for a while, to-night. I could not breathe in there. Order the carriage, and bring me a wrap, and I will get in at the door."

When he had obeyed her commands, and she was seated in the carriage, she bent forward, and spoke to him abruptly.

"Give me your hand," she commanded. "Both of them."

He gave them, with clumsy readiness; and she held them for a moment, in a grasp stronger than he could have imagined her capable of.

"If we were both better, or both worse," she said, "life would look easier to us; but we are just what we are, and there it stands."

She let his hands drop, and turned her face away, as if she did not wish him to see it.

"Tell them to drive on. And, good-night," she added.

As time went on, Floxham found still more cause for wonder, at the quiet which reigned over the new establishment, whose evil influence they had so feared. There were no Bacchanalian feastings within its walls, and few disreputable strangers visited it. It appeared, upon the whole, that, notwithstanding the boldness of his announcement, that he intended to enjoy himself in his own way, Jem Norford was leading as regular and dull a life as respectability could wish. He staid much at home, and was actually sober for weeks together. The foundry stood aghast at the startling temperateness of his habits, and shook its head in private, feeling that such defection from general rules boded no good. "Summate up," was the verdict. "He's noan himself'. Happen th' chap's goin' to take appleplexy. He's just the build for it, fur aw the world. He's always lived a reg'lar loife up to this start; takin' his spree every bit or so, and theer's nowt so dangerous as changin' a chap's settle't ways."

"Happen he's bin convert'd," suggested one individual, slyly.

A shout of laughter greeted this happy thought.

"Now tha's gettin' it. He's just the build fur that, sure enow—Jem Norford. That 'ud go harder wi' him than appleplexy. He's not o' th' rect breed to tak' it koindly."

They were neither altogether right, nor altogether wrong. It was not conversion that was working in Jem Norford's breast; but the fact was, he had arrived at a mental halting-place. Reaction had set in, and for the present his past pleasure palled upon him. He had outlived the day for plunging headlong into the vortex of pleasure, and manhood brought with it certain penalties of satiety and occasional distaste. Sometimes he was glad to stand aloof, and let things drop. In such hours as these, the quiet of the great, lonely, luxurious house suited him, and he felt a longing for some innocent companionship. So he took to Bébé, and grew fonder of her than even he himself knew. The servants had strange tales to tell of the whimsical familiarity which had established itself between them. Bébé spent many an hour in the wonderful rooms; she even dined often at the stately table.

"Blessed if she isn't more at home than me," he would say, laughing loudly. "She might have been used to it all her life. She keeps a chap in countenance, an she's company too."

She was "company" for him. Some leaven working in the small brain made her comprehension of things quick in a fashion of its own—quicker than her hosts. She was not afraid of

the pictures. She asked questions about them, and finding Jem's knowledge of art limited, she applied to Julie. She was particularly interested in a copy of the Sistine Madonna.

"She was good, so good, you say," was her remark. "I want to be good too."

Still she did not belong to the order of ethereal children, this young devotee. Her views of life were chiefly practical ones; she was devout, as she had been trained to be; she was a child, and therefore severely pure in a child's simplicity and ignorance of wrong. It was because she was a child that she had touched Jem's heart, and made herself a place within it.

"There's some as takes to dogs, an' some as takes to horses," reflected he, philosophically. "An' I've noticed as it's chiefly chaps as has nothin' in particular to set their minds on. I've taken to a child. A fellow must have his whim, an' a child's mine."

But he was not allowed to indulge in it long. The child's constitution was a frail one, as her ill-developed frame and small face would have told the most ordinary observer. She was prone to strange, unchildish ailments; and all juvenile trials went hardly with her. The "bad, bad head," of which she had spoken to Jem at their first interview, was one of her chief troubles. It came upon her often, and upon such occasions she would sit, pale and silent, answering all questions with painful gravity. "It's the bad head, Monsieur," she would say to Norford, "I must be quiet."

One morning, as he passed the lodge, the white cap was not within sight, and Julie came to the door, looking troubled and fatigued.

"It's the 'bad head' again, Monsieur," she said; "but this time it is worse than ever before. I laid not down, last night, her pain was so great. It is a strange malady for so young a child. My husband has gone for the doctor. I begin to feel alarmed."

On his return from the foundry, Norford stopped in the village and purchased a wonderful doll, attired in gauze and tinsel. It was the best Floxham afforded, and was considered a work of art, though, its price being above the capabilities of its admirers' pockets, it had simpered from its window full many a weary day.

"She'll like this," he said, with some pardonable pride. "It was only last week as she was complaining of her old one's nose. This'll quite set her up when she sees it."

There was a light burning in the house when he entered it, and a man was bending over the narrow, white bed, while Julie stood near, tearful and subdued. The parcel felt suddenly heavier

than he had found it before. Norford stopped short.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed, under his breath.

The man, who bent over the bed, raised himself, and gave Norford a curt bow.

"It's a bad case," he said, brusquely, and as if he had few words to spare. "Brain, you know; and brain's always a bad business." Then to Julie, "If you will step into the next room with me, madam, I will elaborate my instructions."

They went into the adjoining room, leaving Jem alone with the child. She was lying quite motionless, uttering little moans, and their sound, low as it was, filled the hearer with awe.

"There—there's something wrong up with her," he said. "What is it? She was never like this before."

He unwrapped the doll, and stooped down over her pillow.

"Young un!" he said. "I say, Bébé!"

Almost immediately he drew back, startled and awed by the utter unresponsiveness of the childish face. She neither heard nor saw him. The little moans went on; the half-closed lids did not even tremble.

"She doesn't hear me," said Jem, standing upright again. "She doesn't hear me."

He could scarcely realize the truth, even though it was so plain a one. Who of us has not felt the slow, creeping awe of a familiar face, which is not what it was but yesterday; which has drifted out of our reach, and neither sees nor hears.

He still stood by the bedside when Julie re-entered.

"She doesn't hear me," he said, with a half-bewildered look.

"No," was the answer. "She does not hear you, Monsieur."

As she approached the bed, and touched the child's hands, Julie burst into sudden tears.

"I have not thought that she would die," she said. "She was always frail; but I have not thought that she would die. And she has been to me as my own, from the first hour."

"Die!" said Norford. "She isn't——"

He was startled beyond measure. Yesterday morning she had nodded to him, from her usual stand on the steps; and here was her doll, in all her tinsel finery! He glanced from the painted cheeks, and round, wide-awake eyes, to the child-face on the pillow.

"I bought this thing for her, on my way home," he said. "Nay, I can't believe that."

He could not believe it wholly, even when she told him that the medical man had given her no hope whatever.

"I'll send for another," returned Norford, hastily. "I'll send to London for one—a regular nob. She shan't want for nothin' money can bring. I'm set on her, missis. I tell you I never took to anything in my life as I've took to her. She shan't die if Jem Norford's money can buy life for her." And he passed his hands, in a hurried, emotional caress, over the childish head. "I'd give a good deal to see her open her eyes, and laugh at Miss, there," with a jerk at the doll, who sat staring at the foot of the bed.

"Monsieur is very generous," said Julie, shedding more tears. "Monsieur has the kind heart."

He had. All the great house contained was placed at the disposal of the invalid—wines, kitchen-furniture, servants.

So everybody knew, next day, that Norford had sent to London for a great physician, and had given orders to his household to consider themselves at the service of the gate-keeper's wife; all for the sake of the waif that lay, between life and death, in the little house.

"As if she wur his own flesh an' blood," it was said. "He's a cranky chap to mak' out, Jem Norford; an' he's not haaf bad i' the long run, fur a' his marlocks."

The great physician came in state, evidently bewildered at such a turn of affairs. He was received at the great house, and entertained there, and escorted by Norford to the lodge.

"It's a little lass I've set my mind on saving," said Norford, unwontedly excited, and almost pale with feeling. "Save her!" laying a heavy hand on the shoulder of the great man. "Save her, and set her up again, and send in your bill, and Jem Norford's good fur it, whether it's three figures or four."

But, important a personage as he was, the great man could do no more than the little one had done. He looked at the changed face, and asked questions, and looked again; and at last shook his head.

"My dear sir," he said to Norford, "I am deeply grieved, but I may as well tell you the truth. There is nothing for me to do here. There is nothing to be done." And he laid the child's hand down on the coverlet again.

"Nothing?" echoed Norford. "Nothing, man?"

"Nothing. With children like this one life is never long. The end is at work from the first. It is only a question of time."

When Norford came back to the lodge, having seen the great man on his way to more important duties, in a more important field, he found Julie in tears. The doll still sat propped against the bed's foot, staring at Bébé, who lay upon her

back, her cap pushed off her curly head, her eyes wide open, and wandering.

"Do not go, Monsieur," said Julie, seeing him draw back. "Do not go. I have—There is something I would say to you."

"The pretty Mademoiselle!" murmured Bébé, from her pillow. "The sister of Monsieur! Where is she? The beads upon her neck shine. I must have them, Monsieur,—."

The woman rose, pale and trembling, as if moved by some powerful emotion.

"Do not mind her," she said. "It is not often so. She does not see us."

She was very much shaken by the fit which had gone forth, Jem thought; even more shaken than he had imagined she would be. He did not know that another long-hidden grief was at work within her, until she spoke.

"Monsieur," she said, weeping, "if I had been a mother, even a mother whose child was her shame, even a mother lost and stained, I think, it seems to my heart to-night, that the death-bed of my child would touch me."

"The pretty beads!" said Bébé, softly. "The pretty beads of Mademoiselle Cicely!"

"There is a woman who has been to your house," continued Julie; "a woman I have seen, but who has not seen me, because I avoided her. It is the woman you call Cicely, and, Monsieur, she is my sister—and the mother of the child."

"The mother!" cried Norford, starting backward. "The mother of the child thereto? Good God! Cicely!"

"She is my sister," said Julie. "She was our father's pride and idol, and she broke his heart, and brought shame and ruin upon an honest name. It does not matter for the story; but I had pity upon her child. I could not easily forgive her, but I had sorrow for the child who shared her disgrace. I let her think that it did not live, and she went her way. Our little world was too narrow for her pride and beauty. A life of humiliation and penitence did not suit her. So, she went her ways; and you call her Cicely, and there is her child."

"And she never knew!" said Jem Norford. "Poor lass! Poor lass!"

"I wish," said the woman, "that she should know. She cannot do harm now, and I wish Monsieur, that you should tell her. If she would receive the last sigh of her child, if she is not too hard of heart to care, let her come."

Jem Norford regarded the speaker amazedly. He had seen her before, a bright little woman, of cheerful mien and ready tongue; but now he saw her stern, bitter against sin, hard of judgment, firm in her own virtue, and with small

mercy for those more frail. Perhaps, in the by-gone days of her girlhood, she had felt some natural secret envy and displeasure against the beautiful creature, who had almost seemed of finer clay than the rest of them, and who had reigned supreme in her father's house, so well beloved, and so much admired. And it was but the way of poor humanity, that she should be rather just than merciful, when this idol brought shame upon them all.

"If she is not too far lost to bear a heart within her breast," she said again, "let her come."

Norfard went back to the house, wrote a telegram, and sent it at once.

"The child is dying. Its mother is Cecilia Mercier. The woman is Julie Mercier. Come as soon as you get this."

The next night Bébé died.

But, before death, half-consciousness, and a certain restless strength came back to her. She opened her eyes, and saw the doll, and stretched out her arms for it, and when Norford gave it to her, she smiled. The new treasure seemed to please her greatly; but, after holding it for a while, she became feverish and restless. She wanted to go to the great house. She wished to lie on the sofa, in the pretty room where the picture of the Sistino Madonna was. Monsieur would carry her there.

"I am tired of being here," she said. "I have been here a long time. I cannot sleep here. Take me in your arms, Monsieur, to the pretty room." And she would not be denied.

Ten minutes later the doctor was called from his after-dinner port, by a visitor who had rung loudly at the door-bell, and would not come in. It was Jem Norford, who stood upon the steps, looking very unlike himself, and almost pale.

"It's the child again," he said. "She has a fancy for being carried to my house. I came to ask if it can be done. She looks as if it was too late to harm her, and she wants to go."

"Let her go," said the doctor, his preconceived ideas of consistency much upset by Jem Norford for the fiftieth time. "She will die there as easily as any other place; more easily, perhaps; and it's only a few steps. Do you want me to return with you?"

"Can you do her any good?"

"I am afraid not."

"Then I'll go alone. Good-night." He touched his hat slightly, and turned away, leaving the doctor looking after him.

"Odd doings about a child," he remarked. "It's a whim, I suppose; and he can afford it." From the time that she had spoken, the day

before, Julio had not mentioned Cicely. She kept grave silence on the subject, only now and then glancing toward the road; but when they had moved the child, and she lay on her pillows on the sofa, she spoke grimly.

"She has not come, Monsieur."

"Something's keeping her," said Jem. "She'll come, never fear."

He thought he was sure of her. But as the hours went by, his heart misgave him. It was not like Cicely; but she had not come.

And at last it was midnight, and the child lay clasping the doll in her arms, breathing heavily and slowly. As the last stroke of twelve died away, Julie pointed to the couch, with a significant bitterness.

"She should come soon," she said—"soon."

Soon, indeed, for at that moment there was a little gasp, and Bébé started from her cushion, the doll still held to her little, panting side.

"Monsieur!" she cried. "Julie!"

Jem bent over her, trembling, awed.

"Little un," he said. "Poor, little lass!"

Bébé turned to him with a languid smile.

"The doll is heavy," she said, giving it to him. "Take it, Monsieur."

And her head dropped slowly forward, until it rested against his shoulder.

Julie flung herself upon her knees, at the foot of the couch, in a tempest of weeping.

"Let her come," she cried. "Let her come. She comes too late."

Even at that moment they heard her carriage-wheels, and then her quick feet in the hall. The door was flung open, and she crossed the threshold, panting for breath.

She saw all, at one glance; and when she thrust the kneeling woman aside, with her fierce hand, and took the dead child from Jem's arms to her heaving breast, her face was terrible to see.

"You told me once that you could not forgive me," she cried to Julie. "Ask yourself if I can forgive you? You robbed me of the child, who would have saved my soul alive. You lied to me, and sent me to perdition. And I hold a dead soul to my breast, and a dead child in my arms. I am too late! I am too late!"

She knelt beside the couch, hiding her face upon the little one's breast, and uttering low, sharp moans, in quick succession.

"Take her away," she said, to Jem, with a gesture toward Julie. "Take her away, and let me be alone. I am too late! I am too late!"

CHAPTER IV.

FLOXHAM stood awed into respectful silence, when the little body was carried through Jem

Norfard's stately entrance-gates. Nobody understood exactly why they were impressed, but all were impressed alike.

"Theer's Jem Norford i' th' first carriage, wi' th' crape round his hat," said the lookers-on.

"An' theer's a strage woman i' black, an' hoo's as white as a stone. Hoo'd be han'some, too, if hoo did not look so queer, loike."

"From his own house," said the Squire, "and at his own expense; and that woman there with him. I should like to know what it all means."

When they returned to the house, and to the silent room, with the chill of death upon it, Jem Norford seated himself upon the end of the sofa, and bowed his head in his hands.

"I could hardly ha' believed that a child could ha' made it feel like this," he said, blankly.

His mind was full of vague heaviness and regret. His loneliness was too much for him. He left his seat at last, and went to Cicely, who stood near the mantel, shivering even in her heavy drapery.

"It'll never be the same again," he said. "You can see that—neither to me nor to you."

"The same," she answered, wondering, and yet half understanding.

"The place here," he went on, glancing around him, "it can't be what it would have been; nor you, nor me, Cicely."

As she comprehended more fully, the color rose to her pale cheek. She answered him, sharply,

"No, no, no! Hush, for God's sake!"

But he had something more to say, and he said it unsteadily and awkwardly enough, though in a way that touched her to the quick.

"I'm going to lead a cleaner life, if I've the strength to do it. I mean to keep the place what it would be if therow was a child in it, day in and day out. I'm going to send for my old mother, down in Kent. I did a fair enough part by her, but she's a good old soul, and I chose that she should be far enough away to live at peace. Her way wasn't mine. But I'm going to send for her to-morrow. An' as for you an' me, don't you think that you an' me could make a better thing of life as—man an' wife, Cicely?"

She started back, and stared him in the face, in wild amazement.

"As man and wife!" she asked? "You ask me to—to marry you?"

"That's what it means," steadily.

The tears started to her eyes, and fell upon her cheeks. She held out her hand, and grasped his hard and close.

"You are a better man, even, than I thought you," she said. "But such a thing as that could never be, Jem—never! Some day a good wo-

man may give you what I have not to give—a heart and a pure life. Your way and mine will be far apart, and yours will be the easier to tread. But I think I shall have a chance in the end; just one out of others' thousands."

Norfard only held her hand the firmer.

"Think again, Cicely," he said. "Think again, my girl."

But she shook her head sadly.

"No," she answered. "It cannot be. This is our last hour together, and this is good-by."

In half an hour she had gone. She stopped at the lodge, and had a last interview with Julie.

"Let us forgive each other," she said. "It is well that we should part friends. You judged me harshly when you thought I would not come to the child. When the message arrived I was away, and so I was too late. Will you take my hand in farewell?"

"What I did was for the best," said Julie.

"Yes, yes," sighing. "You thought it was best, but it was hard for me—only you did not know. Let us forgive each other, and—Good-by."

And so they parted, and each went their separate way.

The following week, there came to Jem Norford's house, a simple, gentle, old, care-worn soul, whose kindly face and untutored way contrasted oddly with the surrounding grandeur, and were yet not without their homely dignity. The element of motherly love and pride were stronger than the power of petty customs; and even the stateliest of Floxham society was touched and held silent by the trust and belief they found existing in the loving, warm old heart.

"My son, sir," they heard the old mother saying; "and always a good son to me—always. And now that he's a rich man, it's a comfort to me, you see, to remember; for, as I've always said to him, 'It's well to be a rich man, Jem, but it's better to be a good one.'"

And to the last none undecieved her. Only years afterward, when Jem Norford was a respectable Floxamite, with a large-hearted, handsome wife, and a half-dozen sturdy children, he brought into his mother's room, one day, a letter and a little box, and having opened the box, and taken from it an ivory crucifix, he sat holding it in his shaking hand, looking at it through a blur and mist.

"A woman sent it to me," he said, tremulously, in answer to the old mother's anxiously questioning glance. "A woman who has just died. She was one the world went wrong with; and—and it's a kind of message. Don't heed me, mother; there's nowt wrong with me; only, thank God, it's over!"

CHRISTINE.

BY M. G. MCCLELLAND.

I.

BLUE signifies truth, red signifies love, and the union of the two colors makes purple—truth warmed and vivified by love; love strengthened and upheld by truth. So much for the symbolic ribbon. Now for the cross. A cross symbolizes sacrifice—‘take up thy cross,’ etc. Silver stands second in importance among the metals, and metal signifies uses. Gold stands highest: celestial good—good to the soul. Silver comes next: spiritual good—good to the neighbor: that fits in also with the sacrificial shape. How it all interplays, spiritual and natural—shape, color, and substance—with their meanings. We work out all things by the rule of three.”

Thoughts like these flitted through Alice Sylvester’s brain, as she pinned on the small silver badge of her order, settled her bonnet, and fitted her gloves to her shapely hands. Then she took up a little basket filled with buttered rolls, apples, and bits of cake, pressed the white napkin into place, pushed a book into her pocket, and departed on her mission. It was her day for visiting the women’s ward of the city hospital, and it behooved her to be on time, else the management would be put out. In institutions, one must work by rule and line.

Outside, the sun shone and the breeze sported, wandering hither and yon, lifting the leaves of the trees and mischievously whisking them over, disclosing thereby many secrets of the wrong side—slugs and caterpillars attached, or cankerous spots and blotches where sun-scald and mildew had gotten in nefarious work. There had been rain the previous night, falling on the just and the unjust alike, and cleaning up the side streets and alleys as effectively as the great thoroughfares. Above was the vastness of the infinite; measureless blue depths, of which the eye would weary but for the relief

of clouds whereon the sight could rest, as does the thought of man on an indefinite something interposed between time and eternity.

After a few minutes’ walk, Alice Sylvester turned into a cross-street and paused before a trim brick cottage which stood back from the street in a well-kept yard. “I wonder if she will be ready?” was her thought, as she swung the gate together behind her. Then experience supplied the addition: “Twill be the first time, if she should be.”

Her ring was answered in person by the lady of the house—Mrs. Frank Rose. She wore a breakfast wrapper, and her head was adorned by a tiny lace cap.

“Not ready, Mary?”

The question affected surprise.

Mrs. Rose laughed.

“No; and I’m not going to be. I can’t go to-day. The baby was sick all night, and is restless still and as cross as Cain, poor little man. You must go without me. I intended to send word to you before breakfast, so that you might get somebody else, but I forgot it. I’ve been so busy and so worried.”

“I’m sorry about the baby,” Alice made answer, sympathetically; “it’s his miserable little teeth, of course. Taken all around, from start to finish, teeth are one of mankind’s most active curses. Scientists say that future generations won’t have any, either to get or lose. That scores one to the good for coming ages. I am specially sorry you can’t go with me, because this is hospital day and you promised to sing for Christine Arnesen, that poor Norwegian girl. She seems to like music—at least, she listens as if she did; and, once when you sang to her before, a far-away look grew in her eyes as if memory were quickened. She’s terribly hard to get in touch with.”

“She is indeed,” the young mother agreed; “women who neither talk nor cry always are. Give me a loquacious or a tearful woman, for choice, every time. Wind and

salt-water make breaches. Your dumb sort baffles me. And life is so short for skirmishing around walls with raised draw-bridge and dropped portcullis."

"One can't help feeling that there must be lots inside, though. And being baffled stimulates interest. I always want to see over walls."

Again Mrs. Rose laughed.

"Come up on the top step and tip-toe, then," quoth she, with a suspicion of mockery in her tone. "I can show you what's behind walls, in nine cases out of ten."

Alice did as she was requested, stepping into the doorway and lifting herself upward as much as might be. Opposite was a vacant lot, walled in with a high plank fence. From her coigne of vantage, she could see a space of naked and tumbled-up ground, garnished with broken bottles, fragments of lamp-chimneys, and empty tomato-cans—some of the jetsam of civilization. In the centre of this inviting place, a couple of crop-eared mangy curs—canine gamins—wrangled and fought over a heap of garbage.

The eyes of the woman brooded for a moment, then they lit up: she pushed out her lip saucily at her companion. "Somebody will come along presently and clear away the rubbish and build a fine house there," she declared. "It will be a home, with clean and happy life within it—married life, and the blessing of little children. You will see."

"Make an allegory of it for the Norwegian," suggested Mrs. Rose. "That will be better than my lilting other folks' lays to her. Hers is an imaginative race, even among the lower classes. Make a fine story for her, out of your own head, and tack a stalwart moral to the end of it."

"Like the hurt in a sting-worm's tail," gibed Alice. "That's loving kindness, isn't it? People do so enjoy being preached to, and hunger so mightily for stories with possibilities for personal application."

"Then keep the moral out of the tail," smiled the young mother; "make vertebra of it. Let it start at the nape of the neck—say, your second sentence—and extend even unto the caudal appendage. Incorporate it, as soul within body; 'build to it,' as Mark Twain would say. Good-bye, for the present. My baby is making the welkin ring inside. Don't you hear him?"

Alice Sylvester went on her way with her thoughts busy. The case of the Norwegian interested her, perhaps because the woman herself was different from the ordinary rank-and-file of feminine beneficiaries, with their facile tongues and endless capacity for making the worst of every situation. Her work among the poor wearied her often, although she hardly liked to admit it, even to herself. Their petty malice and spite, their colossal envy and selfishness, jarred on her, and rendered the constant strain on her sympathy and endurance doubly wearing. But here was a woman who made no demand on sympathy whatever—who, if she had any burden save physical pain, was satisfied to bear it squarely on her own shoulders, who wrapped a mantle of silence about her, and, whether she acted her part with grace or not, evidently wanted no on-lookers from another class.

It was hard, and Alice felt piqued and baffled, and the more so because she was a tender hearted woman and accustomed to be met half-way. Moreover, she had been, in some sort, the Columbus of the Norwegian. But for her, the hospital authorities would never have actively interested themselves in the case of the alien; but for her, the woman might have passed straight from her pallet of shavings into the infinite, without evidence of any sort that her exit would be regarded as other than a blessing to herself and a relief to overweighted humanity.

"Thar's a mighty sick woman in t'other room," Grannie White had announced, seven weeks before, when she had gone to pay her customary visit to the old paralytic. "I dunno who she is, or what ails her, more'n she looks to be powerful bad off. Thar ain't nothin' but men folks livin' up here, in the fifth story, 'ceptin' her an' me. I ain't much account for nussin' 'nother. Ther women from downstairs comes up once in a while an' tends to her some; but they ain't able to do much, an' look like her fever keeps a-risin'. I 'lowed the ladies mout take intrus'."

The lady to whom the communication had been made had taken "intrus'." She had gone straight into the adjoining den, without a thought that the fever might prove infectious. She had looked around pitifully at the nakedness, the destitution, of the place, and her pity had culminated when her eyes had fallen on the miserable pallet which it

would be satire to call a bed. The sufferer upon it had lain in a stupor, her eyes half closed, her breath coming in catches. A mass of blonde hair lay along the floor, for there was no pillow; the ragged shawl had been moved aside by the restless tossings of the fevered head, and the shavings had become enmeshed and tangled in its fair length. The neck was thin, with starting bones, and the half exposed breast looked flat and emaciated.

Alice had done what she could, and then gone straight to the hospital authorities and had the poor creature removed to a clean and comfortable bed in the women's ward of the city hospital. Nobody in the house in which she had lived and sickened seemed to know much about her. She had passed in and out, had paid the rent for her quarters, such as they were, had been civil when spoken to, but never avid for conversation. "A still-mouthed creeter," they had voted her. Then, knowing her to be a foreigner, and being fully occupied with their own struggle for existence, they had given her little thought or attention—so little, in fact, that they had not even known of her illness until a workman, who occupied an adjoining room, had been disturbed by her delirium, and so driven to investigation.

Her trouble was brain-fever, the hospital physicians said, and they had had much ado to pull her through with life.

The patient was convalescent now and quite able to converse, if so inclined. Alice had seen her many times, and had talked to her in a gentle tender way, hoping to touch her heart with kindness, and so move her to the relief of speech. Judging others by herself, after our involuntary and most mistaken custom, she thought it would be helpful to her beneficiary to talk; then, too, she herself would know so much better what to say if she could get at the secret of the other woman's life. The sadness of the sea-gray eyes grieved her, the impenetrability of the white face baffled her, and, unconsciously, she grew impatient with the silent tongue.

Being a woman, she could not take impersonal views and give the requisite margin. People are not made alike.

The hospital-ward was clean and orderly. The nurses moved quietly about, finishing up a few odd jobs; for all the heavy work of the morning—the patients' toilets and breakfast,

the bed-making, floor-cleaning, and taking of temperatures—was over. Alice Sylvester entered with a head-nurse who was making her round of inspection. The little basket was deposited on a stand near the door, for the patients in this ward were on special diet, and in no wise must be tempted. After a few pleasant words, the nurse went about her business, leaving the visitor to go whither she would unhindered.

This was customary, and the young lady, with pauses here and there, made her way to the bed at the far end of the ward. Its occupant was awake and lifted a little upon her pillows. Her eyes held recognition for her visitor, but nothing else.

"How are you to-day, Christine?"

The query was put in a specially gentle voice, and with an air of cordial interest. The young lady was determined not to feel thrust away.

The tone of the answer was quite as soft, but there were peculiarities of intonation, and the voice was rounder and fuller.

"I am better—a great deal, I thank you." The visitor seated herself.

"Come," she said, cheerfully, "that's pleasant hearing. And your looks bear you out. You've improved fifty per cent. since I was here before. We'll soon have you about again, as vigorous as the daughter of a Viking. You are pulling away from danger every minute."

From this she went straight on, talking gently, so as not to disturb the other patients. She told of the brightness of the day outside, and tried to make the other realize it: the sunshine on the flowers, the fleecy whiteness of the sailing clouds, the exquisite blue of the sky, the soft stirring of the breeze, the witchery of the shadow-designs, wrought in filigree against the house-sides. She spoke of her friend and gave the reason for her non-appearance, and promised that the treat of music should not be lost, only temporarily deferred. As she murmured on, her eye was quick to note changes in the other's expression—disappointment when she found there would be no music, and regret for the cause. Of the first she did not speak; but, when told of the baby's suffering, her eyes darkened, as does the sea when twilight comes, with clouds. Under her breath, she said softly: "Poor baby! poor little child!"

"Come," thought the quick witted one at

the bedside. "This is better—a great deal better. She can be moved. She is dumbly responsive to two influences, at least—music and little children. Let's test her imagination. A Scandinavian should take to imagery as an eider duck to sun warmed water. I'll try her with a story."

Aloud she said: "Shall I read to you a little? You can stop me when you're tired or have had enough of it."

And again the silent one replied with her formula: "I thank you."

The story Alice Sylvester told was not in the book upheld before her—it was not in any book at all, but took shape before her inner vision, incorporated itself in language, and so was born into the world that day. And, as the story grew and developed, the pity in the eyes of the narrator changed to sympathy and comprehension, and gradually the desire to give assistance in the way most satisfactory to herself gave place to the nobler aspiration—that she might be accounted worthy to render aid at all.

This is the story:

"Among the tender and beautiful legends of the Rhine is one which gives to every stream and fountain a guardian soul, a 'spirit of the water,' whose life is bound together with the life of the stream, and whose mission is to keep it pure and flowing. With the free glad rivers, mountain streams and torrents, the legend grandly deals, picturing the strength and beauty, the fierce joy and wild exuberance, of the spirits embodied in such wonderful creations—the toil, the strife, the music, the rejoicing and power of water in its might, the cruelty of it, and the tenderness.

"With streamlets, rills, and dimpling springs, the legend laughs, showing how the water-spirit murmurs and sparkles, indulging itself in a myriad witcheries and gambols. Most beautiful is this, and the heart rejoices with the water-spirit's joy, and the footsteps linger and pause wherever the silver ribbon of a brook crosses the path, or the bold burst of a wayside spring forces itself into the sunshine.

"But the saddest, tenderest part of all the legend treats of water which has become the thrall of man: the spirits of fountains, wells, and watering-places in the public marts, where the people congregate. Subservient to a master will, these spirits, like other

servants are dependent for well being on a master hand. When the fountain is pure, orderly, and carefully tended, the water leaps and flashes in the sunlight, casting itself heavenward, to fall again to earth in a myriad prismatic colors—rainbows of marvelous beauty. Then the spirit is content, glad and satisfied in a service glorified by love and comprehension.

"But, when neglect allows the fountain to become choked and foul, when the inlets are cut off and the vents obstructed, then the spirit languishes, frets, and moans, while the moisture trickles like heavy tears, instead of lifting itself heavenward with joy. And, if no heed be taken of the sorrow of the thing imprisoned, it will pine and dwindle until its place knows it no more. Then the fountain is dumb and the well dry; and, when weary creatures come, distressed by heat and thirst, they must pass onward, uncomforted; for the song of the water is hushed, and its life-giving presence removed to places that are more worthy.

"With legends like unto this astir within his brain, a student wandered by night about the streets of his native city. The night was very beautiful, fair and still, with a full moon, and an atmosphere as soft and sweet as the breath of a sleeping child. It was the hour at which life ebbs to the turn, and the student moved slowly, so to speak, alone in a slumbering world.

"Into a court-yard he turned at last, passing through a rent in the dilapidated enclosure. The place was unkempt and miserable, and in one corner was an unused well of the old fashioned sort, with uprights and a windlass, both broken and decayed. Half the planks of the wooden cover were gone, and those remaining looked rotten to the touch. The student stooped for a stone, and, bending over, let it fall into the well. A sullen murmur of imprisoned air, displaced by the falling substance, came to his ear, followed by a sodden splash. This water could not leap or flash, even under a blow; it just shuddered, and cringing circles eddied and pushed against the slimy sides of the foul pit. It was the home of frogs, newts, hideous water-lizards, and of rats that swam at will and harbored in dens in the crumbling masonry. Its ragged mouth gaped even in the moonlight, suggesting uncleanness, and inviting to suicide, perhaps, or murder. The

place seemed forsaken of all, in its unsightliness, its misery and hopelessness.

"With a shudder of disgust, the student was about to turn away—what could be done here? what learned? Then another thought came, and he bent again and pulled away the broken planks of the cover, letting the moonlight into the dank depths. The soft rays touched the water—down, down, a fathom, it almost seemed—and appeared to concentrate in a quivering point like a great star.

"Was it glamor of moonlight, or did the light increase to a pale wan glow that lit up all the surface of the water and part of the green and neglected masonry? Moss grew in the crevices, with water-weeds and grasses, bleached and unwholesome as corpses. The surface of the water was dull and expressionless, like the face of one who has exhausted suffering and waits in despair.

"At one point only there was life, and there the light concentrated, and slowly brightened, until the scene was clear and plain as though set upon a mimic stage.

"Beside the eastern wall, leaning against it, with bowed head and loosened tresses, appeared the shadow of a woman. Her hands were clasped and hung straight before her, and her sad eyes were downcast. Her unshod feet were buried in the ooze that formed the bottom of the well, and the quivering of the water caused her garments to move and shiver. Slowly, she unclasped her hands and pressed with them against the water—once, twice—in impotent effort; the ripples caused by the movement circled leadenly and then subsided: there was no other response. No change had been made, no change seemed possible, and the spirit bowed again. No more light, no more sunshine, no more usefulness; caged forever in a foul prison, growing fouler with each year until purity should be transmuted into poison, and the spirit of life into a demon of destruction, with an assassin's dagger under its vaporous cloak.

"With pity, the soul of the watcher grew sick, and, to him, it seemed cruel that such things should be unhindered. Was there no hope? Could there be no remedy? It seemed a hard thing—an unjust thing, left so.

"The light trembled an instant, then burned with a stronger, clearer radiance, and

close beside the tortured one appeared a form far different. This was a noble figure, tall and strong and very beautiful—'a shining one of God,' with eyes of tenderness and a brow illumined with the light of truth. From the Infinite had come deliverance for pain.

"With firm fair hands and mouth that smiled, the Shining One caressed the spirit of the well, and, bending, raised her listless hands, holding them awhile for strength and comfort, and guiding them at last to a portion of the masonry wherein was a crevice wider than the rest. Then he stood aside, attentive to her need, but leaving the work for her, as is the law and must be.

"And lo! a tiny cleft, that slowly broadened like the empty channel of a stream—and the water gave a soft deep murmur of release, and circled rapidly, ebbing into the newly opened channel, impatient to be gone, away through the cleansing earth and out into the sunshine of love, life, and usefulness once more. Lower it sank, and lower; down, down, until the unsightly grasses, that but now fringed its brink, hung high above it. Lower still—down to the surface of the mud and ooze, from which it drained away, leaving the well dry and dead forever, powerless for evil as it had become powerless for good.

"And the student raised himself at length, fully satisfied, and passed out from the enclosure and through the silent streets to his home; for he knew that the strange thing he had witnessed was a miracle of daily happening, the operation of a regenerative law which is celestial."

When the story was finished, Alice Sylvester forbore to raise her eyes for many moments. She was moved within her soul, and the tears were close. For a while, there was silence; then the head on the pillow turned toward her, and the sweet full voice said yet again: "I thank you." That was all.

But the woman who had ministered went on her way satisfied. She was content to leave these things to work out such end as might be.

II.

In the suburbs of a Western village, back from the grassy road which did duty as a continuation of the main street, well set among handsome trees, stood a substantial

two-story brick cottage, with peaked roof and deep veranda. About it was a look of home, of sunshine and comfort, as though the people who lived there were not mere birds of passage, perching for a month or a season, but regular life-tenants, who loved the place and loved to be in it, and to expend time, taste, and money in proving their affection by bettering its condition.

In the rear of the house were gardens which somehow had a classified look, as though their reason for being was other than simply to supply food for the body and pleasure for the eyes. Near the house were large conservatories, in which were represented, as far as space would permit, many sections of this full and beautiful world. Palms, strange writhing cacti, ferns in variety, exquisite lilies and mosses, orchids and air-plants of mystic development, all spoke of the world of the tropics, the wonderful countries below "the roaring forties," with their generous warmth and richness of color. Curious specimens of coniferae and Podocarpus macrophylla, dwarfed to inches in height and cramped into porcelain pots, told of Japanese ingenuity and patience. Lotos and papyrus spoke of the Nile, and strange jungle-grasses, reeds, and shoots of bamboo of the land of the Thug and the cobra.

From the vales of Cashmere and our own land of the South, there were roses—roses in wondrous profusion and an infinite passion of color: white, like the crest of a cloud in the summer; pink, like the heart of the sea-shell; yellow, like gold from the Rockies; and red, like the fire-glow "down in the heart where the heat is." And between these full notes of the symphony came half-notes of shading—cream-white and pale saffron; red played into pink for the treble, and down into black for the bass-notes.

It was a beautiful place, that rose-house, and a good place to be; the stillness and warmth soothed brain and nerves, while the perfume and beauty excited and stimulated the imagination. All that was fair and beautiful within a nature must come to the surface, in a place like that.

A woman, moving among the flowers, sang to herself, in a soft monotone, a queer little melody with a sort of spinning-wheel whir to it. It was quaint and foreign, and the picture it suggested was of a low-browed cottage

with heavy thatch and roof-timbers plain in sight, a background of mountains that touched the sky, a patch of pasture and a cow-house close at hand, and, in the cottage-doorway, a peasant woman in costume, rocking a wooden cradle with her foot and timing the hushing-song to the whirring of her wheel.

The woman among the roses was tall, full-breasted, and vigorous; her fair hair lay in abundant coils between her small ears; her face was strong-featured and pale, and her eyes were the color the sea is at twilight. She moved about, snipping off faded leaves and spent blossoms, there and here, as one accustomed to the place and familiar with the plants she tended. Presently she began to cut living roses, buds, and blossoms of various shades, and to arrange them in an old Satsuma vase. She turned her head from side to side, viewing the effect of her color-combinations, shading pink through blush into white, and through salmon and buff into yellow. She cut no high-colored roses; although just beyond her, almost touching her hair as she stood, was a wealth of crimson and red. The person for whom these flowers were gathered did not love the color of life full-bodied.

For herself, the woman reached one, a great deep-hearted warm-petaled Jacqueline, and fastened it in the bosom of her gown. Then she took the vase in her hands and passed out of the rose-house, closing the doors carefully behind her.

As she made her way along the path to the house, the door of another conservatory, where the palms were, opened, and a man's voice called cheerily:

"Come here a moment, Christine; I've something to show you."

She demurred.

"Your mother may want me," she answered. "I'm taking her flowers to her."

"Nonsense!" spoke the voice again. "My mother is asleep, and you know it. Come: I've been waiting fifteen minutes while you pottered in the other house."

Christine obeyed. It did not occur to either that he might have come to her. He was a scientific botanist, this son of her employer—a masterful man, and one well accustomed to having his own way. He stood in one corner of the palm-house—a burly broad shouldered figure, with iron gray

hair and beard. On a table in front of him was a heap of loam, beside which lay a bundle of plants wrapped in moss, as though newly taken from a packing-case.

Christine advanced to the table and watched him, while he untied the bundles one by one. At first, she thought he wanted her to help him pot the plants. There was a tiny birch sapling, with a bunch of leaves at top, a little fir, a juniper, and two or three bunches of heather. Christine caught her breath at sight of them, and a strange homing look came into her eyes. Owen Goddard looked at her and nodded.

"From Norway," he said. "I got them because I thought it would please you. They are from the lower Romsdal—from near your old home, in fact. We'll pot them for a while, until they recover from the voyage and root firmly again; then you shall show me whereabouts they can best be planted."

Christine said nothing.

He turned to her quickly. "Are you pleased?" he demanded. "Or does the sight of them make you homesick? I did not think of that. Men are clumsy brutes, you know, even when they mean well. If this stuff hurts instead of pleasing you, we'll throw it away." He began to gather the bundles together, as though to suit the action to the word.

Christine staid his hand. "They don't hurt me that way," she said. "My home was gone before I came away. My parents were dead, and in the Romsdal valley there were none others left near enough to care to make a home for me. The old pastor loved me—and one other, a woman; they alone. In the years, they too are dead, perhaps. They were old. It is not that: it is the thought, the kindness—" She paused.

"What thought?" he demanded. "My thought of you? How can that hurt? It is true and strong. Look here, Christine: I've been trying to get a chance to say this to you for weeks—ever since I came home this last time, in fact. I don't know how to put it graciously, to woo in soft periods, like a man used to making love. I can't make love—I can only feel it. I'm a blunt fellow, whose life has been spent in study and investigation of things rather than of people."

His face was earnest and his voice grave; he spoke in short sentences.

"No thought of love ever came to me

until that time a year ago. Then I learned what a woman can be to a man—more, I learned what you might be to me. I love you, Christine. I want you for my wife. Will you come to me?"

She dumbly shook her head, and made a movement as though she would leave him. He stepped between her and the door, and took hold of her hands—vase, flowers and all. The breath of the roses lay between them like incense.

"Not so fast, Christine," he said, masterfully. "A man is not so to be treated. I've a right to speak, and you shall listen. For days you have been as illusive as mountain-mist. Sometimes I've fancied you guessed my intentions and were determined to evade me, if you could. But you shall not. I love you, and I want you. What can stand between us save lack of love on your part? And that—do you love me, Christine?"

He bent his head and tried to look into her eyes. Christine averted her face, but its pallor increased; her eyes must be schooled before they could meet his.

"Do you love me, Christine?"

Still silence. Her head was turned; but he bent suddenly forward and touched her throat with his lips. The blood leaped from heart to brow, as if in answer to his kiss; the woman panted a little, and stood trembling.

Goddard unclasped her hands, stepped back a pace, seated himself on the edge of the table, and proceeded to argue his case:

"I had to do it, Christine. You won't say yes, and you dare not say no. That would be a lie. We both know it. You can't lie, Christine—it isn't in you. That's one reason why I love you—why I want you. You are trustworthy."

He paused a moment, and then proceeded easily, as one who checks off difficulties and removes them:

"It's your pride, Christine—that is at the bottom of all this. You would like to bring your husband other treasure than your love. You say, perhaps: 'This man is wealthy, has reputation, has social status; for me, I have nothing. I will not go to him with naught to bestow save love.' Now, that is wicked of you, Christine—more, it's untrue. And, I take it, the real thing is pride—the pure uplifting article scorns untruth. The other sort of pride is, at root, naught but selfish-

ness, and should be cast out along with other devils. Do you think wealth, reputation, and social status amount to much with a man, if he's got to be made a pariah of for possessing them? If I've done well, must I be punished for it?"

Christine moved her shoulders impatiently. None of this was in her mind. If she could only show him what was! If she only dared show him!

Goddard proceeded:

"Put material values aside. They have nothing to do with the supreme question between man and woman. What I want—what every true man wants, to glorify and uplift his life—is the clean, pure, strong love of a woman. He wants her brave heart to beat in time with his, her pure eyes to look hope and love into his, her gentle hands to soothe and minister to him, her fragrant womanly life to surround him like an ennobling influence. This is what I want, Christine—what you can give me. Come to me, my love—come!"

He bent toward her and extended his arms: his eyes burned with a soft light.

Christine shrank away from him as though in terror; she tried to speak, but her lips were parched; her heart beat heavily, with strokes that seemed to take away her breath.

"I know it all, Christine," her lover wooed: "the long struggle you have had with life, the brave fight you have made. Do you think I have been blind, all these years you have lived with us—that my mother has not spoken? I know how you have watched and tended her. I know how you have striven to improve yourself; how you've read and studied, while other women would have slept or amused themselves. I know how you have tried to make up for lack of opportunity and culture in the past, by extra work in the present. I know the courage, faithfulness, energy, and love you have shown—going your own way quietly, asking help of none, working to noble ends with brain and hand. How could I help loving you? How could I help wanting you for my wife?"

The lips of the woman were compressed to a white line; her soul wailed within her; she shivered, as in a cold wind. It was true—this picture he showed. She had done those things—those noble womanly things;

but back of it all—away in the past! Do deeds never die? Was there no possibility of growing away from what had been?

Her lover talked on, showing her the thing as he saw it—reasoning, persuading, pressing his suit earnestly, manfully. At last she could stand it no longer, and turned her white face toward him.

"Let me go now," she whispered through white lips. "I must think. Wait a little! Oh, be patient! There is something I must do—something I must say. Give me time to think."

"How long?" he questioned.

Something in her tone compelled him; but he was still resolute to gain his point.

"Until to-morrow; give me until to-morrow. I will answer you then."

She broke away from him and went swiftly into the house.

When her work for the day was over, and the gentle invalid with whom she had lived for six peaceful years had been made comfortable for the night, Christine went to her own room to work out for herself the problem of her life.

The room was airy and comfortable; it seemed rather the chamber of an honored guest, or daughter of the house, than that of a paid subordinate. The walls were prettily frescoed, the furniture was handsome, there were dainty trifles on the bureau, and books everywhere, on the tables and the hanging shelves against the walls. A pretty desk stood open, with a pile of silver on it, a little ledger, and a key-basket. Christine was housekeeper now, as well as loved and trusted companion to Mrs. Goddard—Christine, who was the daughter of peasants—Christine, who was a woman with a past.

It was that past which had hold of her now, which was reaching through the years to claim part and parcel with her present.

She moved about restlessly, straightening and moving things without being conscious of it. She had not intended to deceive them—these people who had trusted her, who had learned to love her. Few questions had been asked, and she had volunteered little information. That was all. Silence was so easy, and until now there had been no need that she should speak. Why should she hold an inquest over the past with every new acquaintance? Now it was different; now

there was change and responsibility—a stern necessity laid upon a proud woman, who had grown and developed into scorn of untruth.

She never thought of running away. Where could she hide from a lover like Owen Goddard—a man with a masterful will, and abundant resources at hand? She could not refuge behind his mother's opposition, either. Mrs. Goddard was a liberal-minded woman, and had herself sprung from the people. Besides, she loved Christine, and was dependent upon her for daily comfort and ministration. No; the issue must be met, not dodged. And, moreover, it was not in Christine's nature to slink away like a coward.

She crossed to the mirror and looked at herself—not with the dimpling joy, the softness, the exultation of a woman who knows herself beloved, but with the critical gaze of a surgeon at a subject. There was something here that must be uncovered and dissected. Beside her reflected face, as it were, looking over her shoulder, she beheld another, like it and yet unlike. It was the face of a girl of fifteen—passionate, ardent, self willed; it had a certain wild animal beauty which had worn away from the older face. What was the connection between them? Why should the face of the girl of fifteen seem to underlie that of the woman of thirty?

Christine turned from the mirror and paced the room as a caged animal will pace its den. She was fighting with temptation, eye to eye, hand to hand, foot to foot. On the one side was a secured home, an honored name, peace, love, happiness—and a lie! On the other, the world again, the old battle against adverse conditions—and truth. Herself between, weighing the balance.

Her thought went back to the valley of Romsdal again—the old home from which a love token had been brought for her pleasure. A love token! She flung away from the thought with a choked feeling, as though the past had her by the throat, like a bandog, and worried her. She had been the prettiest girl in the Romsdal valley, half a lifetime ago; the people said so. At the weddings and dancing bouts, who was invited to show off her grace and skill in the dance so often as she? The other girls had envied her, particularly when it had been Eric Ericson who led her out—Eric, who was lusty and strong, who could throw any man in the

valley, and in the dance strike off, with his heel, the hat of the tallest in the room. There had been whisky at those dances—great quantities; and the men drank, and sometimes the women—just a little glassful to brighten their eyes. God above! how it sickened her now to remember!

After the death of her parents, she had gone to Christiana to live. The old pastor had gotten her service. She was eighteen then. Two years later, she had come to America, with some people she knew. She had been told that service was light here, and wages higher than in the old countries. The friends with whom she had come had left her alone in the great city and gone to some other place, where were more Norwegians. She had had a hard time, for the things she knew how to do were not in demand, and there had been nobody to teach the stranger new ways. Finally, she had fallen ill and been taken to a hospital. There she had been tenderly nursed and cared for.

She had not spoken her gratitude to them; she was a foreigner, and a woman of few words. But she had borne it in her heart. A sweet faced lady had come to see her often in the hospital. She wore a silver cross on her breast, and always, when she—Christine—recalled the kind lady's face, the silver cross came with it. Once while she lay ill, a story had been told her—a story of an imprisoned soul which had been divinely helped to work its way out of a foul place. She had thought often of that story, and had tried to work her own way out from the evil and ignorance of her past.

The silver cross lady had gotten her a place as nurse with a friend of her own, when she had left the hospital. She had lived in that place a good while, trying to be faithful and to learn, for she saw that knowledge was needful. When the dear God had taken the little one to Himself, the poor mother had been grateful for her care of it during life, and had found this place for her as companion and assistant to a lady whose health was failing.

Here she had been six years, learning all the time, and making herself useful and honored. At first, she had seen little of Owen Goddard; he had his own pursuits, which kept him sometimes away for months in foreign lands, making botanical researches.

She had come to know him well only a year ago, when his mother had been more than usually ill and they thought that she would die.

The idea that Owen might come to love her never crossed her brain until lately. Then she had fought the knowledge off—knowing that she loved him, and that it must not be. She had knowledge, culture—she had striven upward toward the light—and what had come of it? An awakened conscience, an enlarged sense of responsibility, and the light which showed her that, though her past should forevermore be hidden from the world, it must stand always revealed unto her; she might deceive others, but never herself; blind others, but be ever powerless to cloud her own sight.

What was it Owen had said? "You cannot lie, Christine." No, she could not—even by silence.

That story—it came back to her—it haunted her: the water drained away, "out

through the cleansing earth, out into the sunshine of life and usefulness once more."

She would tell these people who loved her the story of her life, hiding nothing; and then, perhaps, they would forgive her and let her go away—not as a craven renegade from gratitude and truth, but as a woman who had taken up her cross, as it were, and would bear it.

There were places in the world for women such as she—places which might be held with truth. She had knowledge and culture—she would gain more. In the great city, there would be work. The lady with the silver cross would show her what to do.

When, at last, she laid herself upon her bed, worn out with the struggle and the victory, the sky was reddening in the east; and, while she slept, the sunlight came in long level rays through the unshuttered casement and touched the fair hair, flung backward over the pillow, making of it a nimbus above the pale face and folded hands.

DORA'S COLD.

BY MADEMOISELLE CAPRICE.

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D O R A ' S C O L D .

BY MADEMOISELLE CAPRICE, AUTHOR OF "THE MODERN CINDERELLA."

"PHIL! keep the office-door shut, and the window open; none of your sacrilegious games of marbles on the front steps; behave yourself respectably, and wash bottles till I come back, or I'll turn you off to-morrow! Have an eye to Mrs. Thompson's front gate, and if anybody should call for me, you know where I am to be found, I suppose?"

Phil responded by a grinning nod. The question was superfluous. It is an attribute of boys of fourteen to know everything they should not know; and if there be one of the class who excels his fellows in useless knowledge, my Phil is that lad. Apparently busied forever in those light but continuous labors pertaining to an office-boy, he contrived to keep a far more watchful eye upon my movements than I was able to do upon his; and could tell (probably did) exactly in what direction I usually bent my steps after the above formula; whether I walked on the right or left hand side of the street, and how soon I reached my destination; the number of times my tender knuckles came in contact with a certain hard green door, and the reception that awaited me inside it; the length of my stay—the only thing he had a legitimate right to know—and the mien, cheerful or dejected, according to the fortunes of the day, with which I returned to the empty office and full bottles, over which he was supposed to mount guard during my absence.

Preferring not to notice the peculiarity of my assistant's manner, as it might involve awkward explanations, I closed the door of his prison, with an authoritative bang that shook the slate outside it, and strode, with hasty steps, down the village street. There was no occasion for hurry. The business I had in hand was not of a kind to demand it, and had been pending a reasonable time already; nor would any "more haste" on my part be liable to advance it much, but would rather realize the old proverb of "less speed." I, therefore, walked fast purely as a matter of principle, in the hope that the village dames, who I knew were watching my progress from behind the dimity curtains of their "sittin'-room" windows, might possibly think I had been called to a patient. Vain precaution! Idle hope! Every one of those astute

matrons knew, at least as well as myself, the errand upon which I was bound, and, far better than I, (I own it in all humility,) the state of health in^{the} the neighborhood, which precluded the possibility of any professional exertion on my part.

And here I may remark, literally *en passant*, that the town in which I had chosen to "locate" was salubrious to a painful and unnatural degree—the very last place in the world for a young physician in ordinary circumstances to seek his fortune. But my circumstances were peculiar. It was not so much fortune that I sought; in short, I had my reasons—and a large practice would have awkwardly interfered with my more serious avocations. Still I do not deny that a slight modicum of professional business, just to fill up the intervening time and save appearances, would not have been amiss; and I had been, in fact, rather anxiously looking for some symptoms of the sort, for a considerable time, without any result whatever. The inhabitants all took "Hall's Journal of Health;" they cherished "Buchan's Domestic Medicine;" they were learned in the works of Fowler. Cold water was cheap and plentiful; they used it, externally and internally, to the avoidance of expensive nostrums and strong drinks. Exercise was inevitably fashionable where every lady was her own "help," and every gentleman his own wood-sawyer; food was just dear enough to make surfeits undesirable, and medicine was so unpopular that nobody (before me) ever ventured to open a drug-store. The old ladies dispensed a few herbs privately, and that was the end of it. People did not seem to die; if anything nailed them, they perseveringly kept on till it stopped. Fat parties, who ought to have been dropsical, were not so at all: they grew fatter, and flourished like green bay-trees. Lean persons, threatening to go off in a decline, declined to do it, and remained. Adventurous little boys, falling from the tops of high trees to the stony ground, sustained no injuries beyond the cure of the maternal chastisement, and brandy-and-brown-paper of home. Babies defied croup and colic, with the slender aid of Bateman's drops, and syrup of squills, dispensed by a wise grandma; and children of maturer years went

through the popular infant disorders as they went through their grammars and geographies, and with about as much result. Mumps and measles, chills and chicken-pox, prevailed and disappeared without medical assistance; and, though all the children whooped like wild Indians, no anxious parent ever thought it necessary to call in the aid of a physician. There was but one in the place before my advent, a comfortable, elderly man, who had selected the profession—as practiced in his native town—because it interfered less than any other with his punctual habits of eating and sleeping, and was a gentlemanly sinecure possessing uncommon privileges. No patient of his ever dreamed of bringing him out, of nights; the person to be ill chose an hour between dinner and tea, and gave respectful notice accordingly, at a reasonable time beforehand. No extraordinary accidents requiring wonderful feats of surgery were ever permitted in his practice; no strangers ever shocked his nerves by dying suddenly at the hotels; no mysterious epidemics and enemies baffled his skill or defied it; the locality was too low for bronchitis and consumption, and too high for cholera and yellow fever; small-pox was unheard-of, and people "vaccinated" each other; in short, to quote from the only epitaph in the village grave-yard, "Physicians was in vain."

It was a beautiful morning in early summer on which I took my way through this healthful village. I mean, of course, professionally speaking, a very fine morning indeed. The air was warm and moist, laden with pleurisy and ague; the ground soft and oozy—a sure thing for rheumatism and influenza; the sun unseasonably hot—fever and rush of blood to the head. "Old Capt. Hopkins is constitutionally inclined to gout; he never had a twinge during the rainy season, but it is just possible this may settle him. Mother Hawks is rheumatic, is she? If she is about picking up news to-day, I shall be revenged for her slandering me. The Sessions girls come out in all weathers; and that vicious child of Mrs. Thompson's, after keeping me in suspense for four months, will probably croup up to-night, while its grandmother Banks is off on a visit. Dr. Coachev never goes out after dark, and I live right over the way!" With these encouraging reflections, and a grateful glance upward, where a copper-colored sun blazed through a sea of purple mist, I pursued my way to the mansion of Col. Marston, father to Miss Dora Marston, to whom I am honorary cousin.

Col. Marston's house is situated on a fine,

grassy knoll, shaded by handsome trees, enclosed with a well-kept hedge. It is just out of the reach of village eyes and ears, but not beyond the pale of village curiosity. Anybody there can tell you by what right I address good Mrs. Marston as my aunt, and pretty Dora as my cousin, while not in the least related to either. My dear mother, now deceased, when a dashing young widow, possessed of some property and a little boy, married Miss Dora's uncle, and became her aunt, thereby making me, as I consider, virtually her cousin. At any rate I have been, for twenty years, a visitor, at intervals, to the dear old house, recognized, in my cousinly capacity, by the family, and treated accordingly; while, for more than half that time, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, have I sought the avuncular mansion, with an eye to Miss Dora: a fact she seems sublimely unconscious of, considering how many times, by hint and innuendo, by sigh and look, and tender courtesy and downright speech, I have shown her the place she occupies in my mind; and given her, as it appears, the right to drive me out of it—if possible. Tom Hayes is her favorite instrument of torture. He is the young lawyer of the place, as I am the young doctor, and is advancing about as fast in his profession. He is considered a good-looking fellow, though I don't see it, and has undoubtedly a fine voice, upon which pretext he spends about half his time twanging upon Dora's guitar, and waking Col. Marston from his afternoon nap. It would look better, I must say, for a young man in his position, to be at home waiting for practice; but I have heard that he says the same of me, and, perhaps, with equal justice. At all events it was hard to find his horse already tied at the gate-post, on that particular spring day, when, warm and weary, I arrived on the battle-ground, prepared "to put my fate to the touch" at once.

On one side of the house ran the broad, white public road, from which one deviated to approach this earthly paradise; on the other a private one, a mere cart-track, narrower, darker, grass-grown, cool and shady, leading down to the mill-stream that ran behind the grounds. Down this path Dora always took me to walk when she wanted me to say anything particularly foolish which could serve her as food for laughter; and down this path, again, we always must go when that villain Hayes was of the party, and she wanted to play me off against him, or him against me, or both against her womanly vanity.

Accordingly I found them equipped for a walk, loitering on the front piazza, not waiting

for me, however, as Dora took pains to explain, and as I could readily believe; for they were flirting over a new song. Not in the best of humors I took the seat officially proffered by my rival, and, while I wiped my heated brows, advised my fair cousin not to saunter through the damp woodland paths on this most unhealthy morning. "I advise you as a physician, mind you," said I, to give weight to the opinion that might be denied it in my cousinly capacity; but she received it with utter contempt and ridicule, gladly assisted by Mr. Hayes, whose white teeth gleamed wolfishly behind a thick black moustache, at my expense. We had shaken hands with the greatest cordiality.

I had inquired after his clients, and he had professed interest in my patients. I had asked him if he enjoyed his ride with Miss Julia Stevens, and he had just remembered seeing me, as he drove past Mrs. Hedge's, in the front garden with Laura Hedge—a reminiscence which went a thought too far; for I had been, at the time of which he spoke, seated on this very piazza, by the side of the innocent young lady before us, who showed no tokens of the sweet confusion with which she had listened to my broken confidences the night before, and only glanced from one to the other with guileless interest and wondering simplicity.

Now I had said enough to her, on that occasion, to make one feel some anxiety concerning her demeanor, to-day, and some doubt concerning my own. I had a right to expect, after the way in which she listened last night, that if my cheeks burned, and my ears tingled, and my eyes fell, and my heart beat faster, hers would, at least, betray some consciousness of the fact. But not a fleeting tremor shook the little hand, not a shade of color deepened the rose of the round cheek, not a passing thought of bashfulness weighed down the curly eyelashes; she was serenely self-possessed, superbly cool, and attentive to the obnoxious Hayes, in proportion as she was disregardful of me.

Quivering with suppressed indignation, I accepted her careless invitation, and followed the precious pair into the shrubbery, there being no other way of obtaining the explanation I was determined to have this morning. I had often seen such demonstrations before, and borne them with comparative patience, knowing how well worth the trouble of winning, how true and tender, after all, if only it could be reached under these disguising caprices, was the wayward little heart that had tried my love, and tested my temper, all these years. From her very cradle she provoked me; from the

frills of her baby-cap she mocked me; and, grown into the ranks of little girlhood, she systematically tormented me by an artful preference of all the little boys I most hated, for whom she unceremoniously deserted my surer protection. And yet, in all her troubles from torn frocks to Latin lexicons, she flew to me for aid, counsel, sympathy, and affection, repenting of all her sins against me, and walking in a straight path again, till between her sweet eyes, and her pretty confessions, and her gentle ministering to my wounded vanity, she had regained a larger place than before in my alienated heart, and could afford to play the very deuce with it again.

"Twenty years of this sort of thing must have settled the question one way or another," I argued. "There is no use in my putting up with this bewitched turn any longer, or enduring my empty slate, Phil's nonsense, and Tom Hayes' impudence, my aunt's sermons, and my uncle's speeches, and Miss Dora's flirtations. She has either flirted with me, or she has loved me from her cradle; I have sometimes thought it the latter; but I greatly suspect it to be the former. Grand query, which is it? And I resolved to know to-day."

It was in vain, however, that I tried, during the walk, to gain a moment's conversation with Dora, a whisper in her ear, a look from her eyes, a touch of her hand; such favors were reserved for the smiling cavalier who walked at her side, exulting and triumphantly good-natured; though as I followed them, silent and morose, I seemed to read scorning and defiance in the very cock of his hat, as I saw her lifted over muddy places in his proud arms, or climbing a stile by his gallant assistance. And completing this cheerful party, behind me, and before me, and about me, wherever he could get within stumbling reach, trotted my favorite aversion Rover, an ugly, awkward, senseless, and ill-conditioned puppy, whom Dora had elected her prime pet and favorite, apparently for no better reason than that everybody hated him. The colonel kicked him, Mrs. Marston chased him, the cook scalded him, the boys stoned him, and I could scarcely refrain from giving public utterance to the anathemas that burned on my tongue, when the wretched animal, who seemed to have an insane attraction toward me, floundered about my legs as I moved, or flapped his stumpy tail under my chair when I sat still. Dora, alone, with strange perversity, persisted in ignoring his bad habits, his vulgar manners, his uselessness, his ugliness, and his impudence, and set

me at defiance, when I complained of him, by pressing him in her beautiful arms—happy cur that he was!—and laying her soft cheek against his villainous bristles, till, in very disgust and jealousy, I ceased to remonstrate, and learned to submit quietly to his revolting familiarities.

On the present occasion, the few private kicks and pinches I ventured to bestow availed nothing against his clinging affection, till we drew near the water; and the sight of a rabbit's white tail, further up the bank, effected my release from his attentions, for he immediately galloped off in pursuit of it; and a similar happy accident set me, for a moment, free to speak to Dora, without the intervention of the other puppy, as I had secretly denominated Mr. Hayes. He had gallantly volunteered to scramble up a steep bank, after a cluster of pink flowers, which Miss Dora had persistently admired, as they waved in inaccessible beauty high above her head, though sister blossoms bloomed all unnoticed about her feet. Being thus freed from the attendance of my *bête noire*, I approached the little queen of my heart, who stood in maiden meditation on the very edge of the wet sand, where she had planted herself in express defiance of my professional warning, with the water gently oozing up around her thin slippers.

"Don't come here, cousin, I'm afraid you'll wet your feet!" she called out, in an impudent voice, as I drew near; but her lashes were not lifted, and such a rosy flush crept up her face, as she said it, that I forgot my hot walk, and hotter indignation, and glowed less with anger, and more with love. I laid my hand lightly on her shoulder, looking down at their mocking lips, and, stooping, whispered in her ear. In spite of her uneasy pretexts to escape, in spite of female coquetry in her person, in spite of Tommy Hayes, in spite of Rover, that marplot puppy, I had a moment's hearing, and used it manfully; and as I whispered my heart beat thick with triumph, for she could not raise her eyes to mine, they were pensively watching the source of the rippling flood, and bright tears seemed quivering on the curling lashes; her cheeks were a warmer scarlet; her pretty lips trembled with the fateful answer, and I was sure it wasn't "No," and saw them part—gracious heavens! to emit one of those shrill female screams, that, more than trump of war or voice of cannon, strike panic into the bold heart of man and unnerve him to the finger-ends. "My dog! my puppy!" she sobbed, "he'll be drowned; he can't swim in that current! He's coming down stream tail first, poor

fellow! I knew it was him! Oh! why don't you go and save him?"

This passionate appeal was addressed to the sympathizing Hayes, I being in disgrace on account of an unfortunate ejaculation uttered in the first surprise—an impoliteness in marked contrast to the graceful gallantry of the hero of the cliff, who supported the weeping maiden in his arms, and tenderly soothed her excitement as the unhappy Rover whirled and eddied toward us.

"Why don't you go?" she reiterated, stamping her little foot, and as her eyes this time wandered toward me, I responded by throwing off my cap and coat. It was of no use to explain to her that it was almost impossible to rescue the dog, and that the attempt would involve great risk of my own life; what did she care for that? The emotion I had so proudly misinterpreted on her lovely face was for a blundering, senseless puppy; the heart I had so faithfully served to win was given to a miserable dandy. What remained to me but to finish a life devoted to an unworthy object, by consistently sacrificing it in the same worthless cause? And with the bitter hope that my failures would end here, I prepared to plunge into the rushing water.

I could not help looking back at Dora, who, tightly clinging to Mr. Hayes' arm, had been hidden from me, during my rapid preparation, by his tall figure and ample white linen robes. "Don't you go," she had said to him; "let George go, if he can swear he can swim! Don't you try, Mr. Hayes!"

Mr. Hayes had no idea of trying. He risk his life—a life so precious to a world of spinsters for a miserable fellow puppy—he wash the dye from those perfumed whiskers dear to the hearts of so many maidens—he ruin those freshly-laundered clothes—he abandon those new French boots! Ridiculous! He glanced down into his companion's face with a smile of exquisite amusement, as she said it; but Dora's eyes were tightly shut, and she did not see him. So the sneer traveled to me who was about to drown in his stead for his lady's pleasure, and gave my heart its last dying pang as I quitted the shore.

A cry of terror and recall, from what had been a dear voice, followed my splash into the deep water, and thrilled my nerves a moment; but I struck out boldly for the whirlpool, where plunging, yelping, struggling, revolved the wretched beast to whom my cousin had resolved to sacrifice my life, and for whose sake she was crying on the beach. Much time was

lost in reaching, more in capturing the blundering fool, who, mad with terror and fright, feared me more than the water; and when I got him in my arms at last, we were rapidly shooting toward the cruel wheel, that splashed and creaked a hundred yards below, ready to suck us in to certain death. Well, what mattered it? Dora would be sorry, perhaps, at least for the dog, and so desperately bitter and revengeful, I felt, that I was glad her clumsy pet, since she loved him, was to drown in my company, that she too could feel what it was to mourn the loss of something dearly loved, and that my death would, at least, be associated in her mind with some painful event; in short—I despised the weakness, but it would have its way—that some of her dear and precious tears might be wept for me. I closed my eyes upon the shifting scene and tried to prepare for death, unconscious that the current was bearing me nearer the shore, and that my only chance of escape was close at hand. Something struck my face, a thrilling voice called my name. I raised my heavy gaze, and there, clinging to the farthest branches of an old tree that had fallen over into the water, was Dora, her cheeks wet, her lips white, her eyes imploringly fixed on me, or on the burden I carried, unheeding the rushing flood that saturated her tiny feet and floating dress, and threatened to bear her away from the frail support to which she clung. Feeble, exhausted, despairing as I was, there was a magnetic power in that dear voice, in that beautiful pale face, that inspired me with hope and drew me back to life.

A few strokes drew me nearer, the stream drifted me among the sweeping branches, I was clasped in those beautiful arms, then seized and dragged along by a stronger hold, and presently lay half-senseless and wholly exhausted on the bench. I was content to lie there while I fancied I heard a familiar voice breathing softly in my ear, and felt caressing hands touch mine, warm tears baptize my cheek, and gentle fingers extricate the gasping Rover from my drowning gripe. But after he was removed, I seemed to be more roughly handled by less tender ministry, and opened my eyes to find the zealous Mr. Hayes kneeling by my side, and—under his fair mistress' orders, of course—doing his duty toward my resuscitation. At a safe distance stood Dora, her dripping favorite sneezing and floundering in her arms, and her happy face beaming rosier and fairer than ever, in contrast with her soiled and draggled garments, as she pressed the precious rescued treasure to her breast, and received her lover's congrat-

lations on its safety, with only an occasional furtive glance at me, as I lay helpless on the sand, slowly coming back to life under his active treatment.

So the tears, the pallor, the gallant rescue, were for the sake of that worthless dog! I was saved, incidentally with her interesting favorite, as I might have drowned for his sake and no questions asked; and, having accomplished my high mission of preserving the stupid brute, lay unattended and uncared-for, at her feet, dependent on the kind offices of my successful rival! The blood rushed back to my heart, the strength to my nerves, as I slowly drank in the bitterness of this cup.

"Your cousin's better, Miss Dora," said the benignant Hayes. "Ain't you going to thank him?"

She moved nearer in instinctive obedience to him, bashful, tearful, trembling, confused, but radiant and lovely as I had never before seen her, and lifting her timid eyes to his for further instructions with a deprecating grace and softness of manner, while she carefully averted them from me. I could bear it no longer, and with an energetic oath sprang up, knocking Tom Hayes back into my place, and extorting a little scream of surprise from Miss Dora. Without a look or thought cast backward, I strode away toward the village, determined to shake its dust from my feet and depart next morning, never again to look upon the faces of the precious pair I had left. I rushed like a whirlwind through my aunt's kitchen, on my way, and bade her good-by.

"Good-by! Georgy, what does the boy mean?" said she. She was phlegmatic and slow of comprehension.

"I mean I shall never see you again, aunty; God bless you! I'm going away to-morrow."

"Hoity toity! Nonsense!" said she; "some folly of yours and Dora's, I suppose; never mind her, a silly girl! You'll be my own boy yet, my dear! But you are dripping wet, George, you must have been in the water, and you'll take cold. Here, swallow this," and mingling sentimental with spirituous comfort, the good old lady poured a fiery glass of brandy down my throat; and I poured my sorrowful story into her motherly ear, as I had done when an orphan boy, and all my life since, waxing warm with anger and contempt as I told it, while her benignant face showed no sympathy with the indignation that glowed on mine.

"So good-by, aunty," said I, as I finished, in a tone tremulous with weakness and wrath;

"you love me, if Dora does not, and you will remember me kindly, I know." I wrung her hand and kissed her cheek; but she never shed a tear. She had been used to weep like a watering-pot, when I went back to college after a visit, and I had always left her loaded with biscuits and blessings, and, thankless prodigal that I was! rather disposed to laugh at her display of maternal sorrow. How grateful to my wounded and sorrowful spirit, my outraged heart, would such a demonstration of affection now have been! But all were alike heartless and cold to-day, and she smiled serenely under my parting kiss, only saying, as I ran down the steps, "Good-by, Georgy; promise me not to go before you're well rested to-morrow morning; and you'll come back if I have occasion to send for you professionally?"

I bowed assent. What could I do? And, out to the heart, went slowly and wearily home. I do not know by what way I arrived there, or whom or what I passed upon the road. I saw nothing but the darkness of my future, and felt nothing but the sorrow that consumed my heart. Phil was astonished at the gentleness of the reproof I bestowed, on finding him among a crowd of juvenile vagabonds that were playing pitch-penny in my very office; but how could I expect him to be true when all others were faithless? I was too broken in spirit to administer justice upon him as he deserved; and, quite conscience-stricken, he waited upon me assiduously till my last bottle was packed at midnight, and I sent him to bed with orders to call me at daybreak. The stage came through at eleven, and I usually rose at nine; but I scorned to comply with my aunt's injunction to take my usual rest, and was bent upon suffering the additional martyrdom of early rising.

What weary, dreary hours! I heard every one of them strike, as I lay tossing on the patient spring mattress, in that darkly shaded room, where I was wont to sleep the sleep of the sluggard; but through all the long night no slumber visited my eyes till the day broke, and having watched the spectacle of the sunrise with wonder—it was long since I had seen it—the novelty put me asleep, and from thence into a dismal dream, from which I was awakened by a terrible thumping at the office-door, and the shrill voice of my Phil in communication with the person outside.

"I shan't open the door for nobody," cried the faithful janitor, "and if you don't stop knockin' on it, I'll come out and show yer. He's asleep, I tell ye; goin' away to-day, and wants to get up in time for the stage; but I

shall let him oversleep hisself, and he'll think better of it by to-morrow. Come this afternoon if you want to see him, that'll do for you."

"But I tell you it won't do," returned a gruff voice, which I recognized as that of Col. Marston's "hired man." "Miss Dora's sick of pleurisy, catched her death of cold yesterday fishin' her puppy out of the river; Dr. George was on it too, and you'd better let me in, for he'll be ravin' when he hears Miss Dora's out of her head with a fever this morning, and Mrs. Marston told me to bring him back, and no excuse."

I sprang out of bed and was down stairs questioning the messenger before Phil could invent any more excuses for keeping him out. Dora sick of a fever, and I called in! My pride revolted at entering the house again, after the treatment I had received from its inmates; but I had promised Mrs. Marston to return whenever "professionally summoned," and my promise was sacred; the other doctor was worse than useless, and if Dora should be dangerously ill—lovely, brave Dora, who periled her life for mine yesterday, for mine and the dog's—but never mind that now—she was heartless, but could I find it in my heart to turn away from her in her sorrow? Alas! I was still so weak that my love drew me, more than my pledged word, along the well known road, that yesterday I had vowed never to tread again.

My aunt met me at the door. I was breathless and agitated, but she seemed more cheerful than I expected; her eyes were full of tears, for she had just come out of the sick room, but there was a smile on her kind face as it looked pleasantly into mine.

"Is she very ill?" I stammered.

"Not very," she said, coolly. "Come in here a moment, Georgy," and, still retaining my hand, she drew me into her own little sitting-room and shut the door. "My dear boy," she went on, placing both her kind hands on my shoulders, "don't be alarmed. I sent you rather an urgent message, but I was afraid that you wouldn't come, in spite of your promise, and I want this settled about you and Dora; you have tormented each other long enough, you with your jealousy and blindness, she with her flirting and nonsense—I don't say she was not the worst, but that's over. No, she's not very sick; don't interrupt me! She caught cold yesterday, as I thought she would in that wicked, foolish business you were all engaged in, tempting of Providence, I call it, but I hope it will do you good. So to-day she has some fever, nothing more, but she looks badly and feels

dreadfully; and as she has hardly been sick a day in her life, thinks she is going to die, or she never would have told me what she did tell me. I'm her mother, it's not for me to betray her; but you're my son too, and I wish you both happy; so go in and do what you can for the poor girl, and don't ever give us reason to repent putting Dora's heart into your hands, Georgy, my dear, bless you!"

She gave me an affectionate kiss and fluttered into an inner room, just as the morning stage rolled by the door. She was saluted by a burst of sobs, and a strange muffled voice asking hardly intelligibly, "Wasn't that the coach, mother?"

"Yes, dear!"

"Then he's gone, mother, and he'll never come back. I treated him so badly, you don't know! even when he nearly drowned saving Rover!"

"Poor Rover! he wants to see you."

"Don't let him in! don't, mother! I hate the very sight of him."

"George is here, Dora."

"George!"

"Yes, dear."

She made no answer, but cried harder than ever.

"I sent for him professionally," at last said her mother, "I can tell him to go away."

"No, wait a minute, mother. But I can't see him, I'm ashamed to see him."

My aunt made no answer, but came out, ushered me in and shut the door after me.

In a darkened chamber, dim and dismal, within a great stuffed chair of state, before a low, slowly smouldering fire, sat poor little Dora, swathed in blankets and muffled in shawls; her tiny feet, wrapped in a woolen bundle, rested on hot bricks, and her aching head was tied up in red flannel bandages that smelt of brandy—she had a mustard plaster on her chest, and a "pepper gargle" for her throat, and a cup of boiling ginger tea stood at her elbow. Her pretty nose was swollen out of shape; her bright eyes were dimmed and tearful; and little blisters had broken out all over those kissable lips; a very damp white handkerchief lay on her lap, and two great tears that it had not yet wiped away, ran down her flushed cheeks. Poor child! she put up both her small hands when I came in, to hide her little red face, but I could see the tears dropping between her slender fingers. Sorry and ashamed, and afraid to speak, but more hopeful and happy than I had often felt, I went quietly and stood behind her chair.

"George!" she said, presently, in her poor, little broken voice, "are you there?"

"Yes, Dora."

"Are you very angry with me?"

I put one of my hands down over the chair-back and drew both hers away from before her face, and then came round and kissed it. I could not think of anything better to do.

"You are not going away?"

I shook my head. "That is not for me to say."

"Who then? Will you please tell me what you mean, George?" She was very gentle and submissive; but the burning hand I touched began to grow cold.

"It is for *you* to say, Dora dear. Did you need to ask me that after all these years?"

Without a single word, but with a fond, impulsive movement, she turned to me, put both her little arms around my neck, and laid her feverish cheek against mine, crying as if her heart would break.

"Why did you come back, Georgy?"

"Because I loved you, Dora, and couldn't stay away."

"Yes, you would, if I had not been sick, mother told me so. I had hurt you too cruelly and treated you too shamefully; you were proud, but you were very patient, Georgy. How long have I plagued you?"

"Twenty years!"

"Then I have loved you twenty years, and tried not to have you know it. I was very proud, very wicked, very mean, but I am sorry now. I did not want to have you or anybody see how much I cared for you. If I die," at last she sobbed, "you will think better of me."

"My dear Dora, you are not to die, you are to marry me in three weeks. You have a little cold, that is all, and I'll give you time to recover your voice and get those ugly blisters off your face."

"Is it so very ugly?" she whispered, hiding it against my shoulder.

"Very ugly indeed, and I hope it will stay so till we are married, then we shall have no more flirting with Tom Hayes; I wanted to murder him yesterday, Dora, when—when you invited me to drown and not him."

"Oh, George! I didn't know the danger till you were gone and it was too late! I knew you were brave and could swim, and that he wasn't and couldn't! I thought you could do it easily, and never dreamed of your drowning till he told me—and then——"

"And then my little heroine risked her life to save me?"

"I wouldn't have cared to live without."
"And cried over me when I was landed?"
"I was so glad and thankful, dear George!"
"But was ashamed to let Tom Hayes see it afterward?"

"No; only ashamed to speak to you, because I had behaved so badly, afraid you would order me away out of your sight forever. I am bad, I know, but indeed I am not so bad as that."

Ah! how easy it was to believe it with that sweetly humble voice whispering in my ear, those drooping eyes truthfully upraised to mine, the new charm of her timid, deprecating manner going straight to my yielding heart.

All at once a trembling, snorting sound at the door announced Rover.

"Shall I let him in?" I said.

"Just as you please, dear," she gently answered. "If he is so disagreeable to you, I will give him away," she added, timidly.

Heavens, what a change! I was completely conquered by this last convincing proof of affection; though, as to giving him away, what mortal in his senses would have taken him? Of course he remained to become a privileged member of my family, growing dearer to us both as he fattened upon meat at a shilling a pound, like the favorite of some Chinese epicure, and broke uncounted china in his playful moments. At the very altar, or rather I should say the piano, before which we stood to be married, he interfered with the happy arrangement of the bridal party by his ill-timed blandishments; but afterward did me good service by getting under the feet of the groomsman, and endangering his equilibrium as he was about to kiss the bride.

"Poor Hayes!" I said, pretending sympathy in alluding to this incident with her.

"Oh! you needn't pity him!" she responded, rather spitefully I thought; "he will be married to Julia Stevens before the month is out," and so he was.

Some time has elapsed since the occurrences just narrated gave me my first patient, and decided me to remain in the neighborhood with or without others. It is fortunate that I did so, for the spell is broken that held us in preternatural health; and no invalid subscribing to this periodical need address me under cover,

editor of "Peterson's Magazine," for the proper name of the town, with a view of seeking its salubrious air. My practice is increasing rapidly in spite of Mrs. Thompson's baby, which has hitherto disappointed my expectations of croup, but promises in time a beautiful case of hereditary bronchitis. Capt. Hopkins is on his last legs with the gout, unless he soon resolves to spend part of his income in improving mine, and mother Hawks is a prey to the acutest inflammatory rheumatism. The late fine fruit season has been productive of much cholera infantum, and the recent fall in provisions has induced a similar decline in health among the rural economists; a railroad is projected through our midst, which will bring foreign diseases and disorders among us, and turn our peaceful Arcadia into a miniature New York. I see, with the prescient eye of imagination, a busy and prosperous future in store for me; I see my handsome and hitherto unused set of surgical instruments often taken from their case for "disasters," collisions," and "smashes;" I see fashion reigning in our humble streets with her neuralgic little bonnets, her consumptive thin shoes, her lung-compressing corsets, and fever-tempting bodices, or later abominations to take the place of these, and her unseasonable hours, unseasonable excitements, and unnatural quantities and qualities of food and drink. I see my little stock of drugs increasing to a mighty establishment; my Phil of some use at last, and Rover hoarse with barking at the ringing of the night-bell. I see Dr. Coachey retiring in despair to his whist and his sanguine, and myself sole autocrat of the village health; and brightest of all these bright visions, I see my pretty Dora, the beautiful spirit of light and love to my household, infinitely lovelier and more charming than ever in her girlish days, but without the faintest symptom of the coquetry that marked her then, blind to all fascinations but mine, and such a devoted wife, that she upholds my whiskers (which are inclined to reddish,) to be of the finest auburn, and does not envy Mrs. Tom Hayes the "sable splendors" of her husband's face; in short, I see daily more occasion to thank heaven for all the happy consequences of DORA'S COLD.

GOING OVER THE FALLS.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

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GOING OVER THE FALLS.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

We stopped at the Cataract House.

Tired with long travel, covered with dust, and disappointed at not getting a room facing the rapids, my rising irritability culminated, when I was shown into a chamber, up six pair of stairs, next door to what seemed a noisy cotton-mill.

"This is abominable," I said, crossly, when I found myself alone with my companion, "spinning jennies at Niagara!"

My companion burst out laughing.

"Spinning jennies! It's the sound of the rapids," he said.

And the rapids it was. But to my dying day, I will maintain that the "first sound of Niagara," about which so much has been written and so poetically, is like the incessant rattle of a cotton-mill, the hum of a hive of spinning jennies.

The next day I went over to Goat Island for the second time, and alone. The rush and whirl of those great rapids, whose half smothered noise had struck me so unpoetically, had taken deep hold of my imagination. I could hardly, on that first day, tear myself away from them. "Five mighty lakes," I said to myself, "are writhing there, and though they know their doom, they are vainly struggling against it, as the frantic and strong will do even when hope is dead." What could a weak swimmer do in such a moment, was my constantly recurring thought. I could not shake off the terrible fascination of this idea. Once or twice, I felt an insane temptation to leap in, as men sometimes are tempted to jump from the top of a steeple; and though I put away the suggestion with a shudder, and at last resolutely left the rapids, I could not resist returning, on this day, and alone.

I selected an unobserved spot, where a little peninsula jutted out into the current, and throwing myself idly down under the shadows of thick trees, began to watch the foaming rapids shooting past between me and the Canadian shore opposite.

At first I was not wholly insensible to the coolness of this sheltered nook, so refreshing after my hot walk. I heard, with a sense of drowsy pleasure, the murmur of the insects around, and the light breeze stirring the leaves overhead. But gradually I lost all consciousness of these, as

my entire being became absorbed in the whizzing waters. I saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing but the never-ceasing motion of the rapids.

I remember trying in vain to calculate the velocity of the wild current. For this purpose, I took out my watch, and fixing my eyes on a flake of foam, in the middle of the river, followed it as it hurried toward the cataract, which thundered not a quarter of a mile below. But I lost sight of my mark almost immediately in the multitude of other bits of foam, all hastening the same way. I then selected another, but it vanished as fast. Every subsequent attempt was equally unsuccessful. Soon I could see nothing but specks of foam, whitening by continually, swiftly, silently, eternally. As fast as one shot past, another rushed into sight, millions following millions, till I had no consciousness of anything else, past, present, or to come. The one idea of never-ending motion, that began with Eternity and would go on forever and forever, possessed me, till my brain grew dizzy.

Perhaps some, who may read this, have experienced similar sensations, though to a less intense degree. If so, they will be able to realize how such an idea, indulged in without restraint, may lead to madness. Some such reflection crossed me, for a single instant, breaking momentarily the spell of this morbid idea. But it passed from my mind immediately. I had not strength of will sufficient to resist the horrible fascination of the sight before me, with its idea of never-ending motion.

At this point an insane wish began to take possession of me. I would share in this motion: I would, so far as I could, become a part of it. Mechanically I commenced preparing to enter the water. I did not, at first, intend to go out into the current. The little peninsula, where I reclined, formed a tiny bay on its upper side; and here I dropped myself gently in. I recollect the delicious sensation that shot through every nerve, as the cool water laved my limbs. It was an instinct of the peril I ran, rather than a definite consciousness of it, that led me, for a moment or two, to hold on by the grassy bank. The current, during this interval, eddied softly by, as if it could do no harm: and allured by its

promise of safety, I let go, still instinctively, for all this while I felt rather than reasoned.

Oh! the exquisite pleasure of that bath. Lazily swimming, I was borne gently around and around, as the eddy revolved in the little bay. Now I swept slowly by the bank, the grass and flowers leaning over to kiss me as I was carried, with slightly accelerated speed, along the edge of the outer and onward current. But scarcely had my eyes dreamily rested on the rushing rapids, before they met again the sweet blossoms on the bank; and thus, in a drowsy circuit inexpressibly luxurious, I continued languidly revolving. The idea of motion still engrossed me, but it was now deprived of its maddening quality: it was endless motion still, but motion refined and subtilized. The horrors of that rushing river, dashed continually into breakers, and drawn irresistibly toward the glassy, inflexible edge of the awful cataract, no longer half crazed me. I felt as if suddenly relieved from a thought, which had been making me insane; and closing my eyes in delicious rest, I allowed myself to float on my back, guiding my course idly with an occasional stroke. The rustle of leaves, the drone of bees, and the gurgling sound of the revolving waters, though not consciously heard by me, assisted to soothe my excited feelings, as when a mother's voice hushes the fevered brain of a sick child.

Suddenly I felt as if shot through a sluice-gate. To recover my position, to strike out, and to open my eyes were instantaneous. The peninsula was already receding fast in the distance. In my lazy circuits, I had unconsciously and gradually approached the edge of the eddy, until, all at once, the current had seized me, propelling me out into the stream, and toward the jaws of the frightful cataract.

I realized immediately, not only this, but the single chance there was for my preservation. I knew that if I swam directly for the shore, I might probably reach land just above the Falls; for to regain the spot I had left was impossible. Once, in the Delaware, I had escaped drowning, by crossing a tidal current in this way. So I struck desperately out.

When one swims for life, it is no child's play. Every muscle was strained to its utmost tension, and as I buffeted the rough waters, I began to hope. Though still careering with the current at a frightful rate, I was drawing nearer to the shore. Close on this side of the cataract, a bit of land jutted out, which I calculated, if I continued to gain as I had, I should reach. The thought gave me, if possible, additional strength. I was never cooler in my life than at this mo-

ment. Measuring with my eye the distance to the point, and marking the rate at which I was moving with the rapids, I felt certain that I should save my life, if my strength held out.

The shores, meantime, were rushing past me, as fences past an express train. The roar of the turbid waters, chafing and tossing all around me, was in my ears continually. Mightier than all, the low, deep thunder of the rapidly approaching cataract, rose, like a solemn undertone, swelling and swelling louder. I could not see the Fall itself, but glancing in its direction, I beheld the convulsed rapids subside into quiet as they approached its brink, where they curved downward, like a sheet of green glass, and were lost to my vision. But the vapor, that rose in clouds beyond, and against which they were relieved, suggested the tremendous chasm into which they had disappeared. Added to this, the very waters that enveloped me had a tremulous motion, totally distinct from that caused by the waves, which impressed me, in a manner no pen can describe, with the weight of the enormous mass precipitated over the Horse-Shoe, and not less with the depth and magnitude of the abyss into which it fell.

I had now reduced my distance from the shore more than one half. "A few bold strokes," I said, "and I shall be safe." But, at that instant I observed a sunken rock, one of the many that intersect the rapids, lying directly in my track. The swift waters, momently arrested by it, tumbled wildly about, boiling and crackling, and shooting jets of spray high into the air. To pass above it was impossible, even with the utmost exertions. If I would escape being dashed to pieces against it, I must go by below. But this involved the risk of missing the point, and that was certain destruction, for, just beyond, the current rushed out into the very centre of the river, where I should infallibly be swept. It was no time, however, for hesitation. I had but the one course, and, therefore, remitting my efforts for an instant, I permitted myself to drop past the rock.

Now began a tremendous struggle. It was absolutely necessary to regain what I had lost, and to regain it quickly. I felt endowed with the strength of a dozen men. The point was still considerably below me, and so far there was hope. But the current was bearing me along, with a constantly accelerating velocity, so that this hope was the slenderest possible. The water, still tumultuous from its collision with the sunken rock, now dragged me under and now flung me, half drowned, to the surface. Yet I battled on. Now the point is almost gained.

A slight eddy swings me nearly to it. Another stroke or two and it will be gained. Thank God! I almost grasp that root. No! Another eddy seizes me, it whirls me around and around, it mocks me twice, by casting me almost ashore, and then hurls me out into the river. The point shoots past like lightning.

All these events had occurred in a space of time incredibly short, in a period to be counted by seconds, not by minutes. No bolt, shot from warlike engine, ever went swifter than I sped now. A long, deep breath, when I found I had missed the point, and I was nearly in the centre of the rapids, right above the Horse-Shoe. An instant only separated me from Eternity.

Yet what an experience was crowded into that instant! I saw everything around me as plainly as if I had been an unconcerned spectator. The rapids, just before reaching the Falls, lose their turbulence, approaching the precipice smooth and majestically slow. The volume of water, it will be remembered, comprises the drainage of half a continent, the contents of five mighty inland seas, and therefore its depth, at this point, must be enormous. Whatever inequalities of rock there may be below, the surface, in consequence, is undisturbed. Arriving at the edge of the abyss, it seems to pause a moment, and then curves solemnly downward, a mass of translucent green, as polished as a mirror. All this I curiously noted. I saw also the shores rushing past on either side; the white walls of the Clifton House ahead shining calmly in the sun; and the stone tower, that, built out from Goat Island, impended over the cataract to my right. A few people, I observed, had seen my peril. Some were running to the shore and shouting, while others seemed to be paralyzed with horror.

I had now reached the edge of the abyss. I cast a glance upward at the sky, the last I should ever take, and I remember it seemed to me bluer and calmer than ever. A lady, in the tower I have mentioned, seeing me at this moment, sank back into her husband's arms fainting; and it appeared to me that I heard her shriek as she fell. I could now see down the Fall. All around me, as well as above and below, the water was as smooth as glass, my body seeming not even to ruffle the surface, but to be set, mosaic-like, in it, only a few ripples diverging on either side, as from an insect skimming a placid mill-pond. But I could see, that, about half way down, the face of the cataract began to break into fleeting bits of foam, looking like frosted-silver, that came and went in rapid and endless succession. But it was at a vast distance beneath, for high

as the Fall had seemed, when viewed upward from Table Rock, it now seemed immeasurably more so as I glanced below, during the one fearful instant that I hung poised on its top. I do not exaggerate when I say that it appeared hundreds, nay! thousands of feet to the abyss at the bottom. It seemed as if ages would pass before I should reach there, ages during which I would be falling and falling forever. And what a bottomless chaos yawned below! I do not know that human language can figure forth that chasm. For between the falling waters and the boiling vortex in front of them, a shaft opened downward, that seemed to run to infinite depths. I remember asking myself should I ever emerge from it? I recalled the fact that I had heard that the bodies of persons, drowned at the Falls, frequently did not come up until they reached the whirlpool, which was miles down the river, and that there they often revolved for days, weeks, and even months. Was there a subterranean connection between the foot of the cataract and the maelstrom? I had just visited the Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky, where similar under-ground channels existed; and it was not impossible. Or did that shaft, as seemed more likely, in that awful moment, penetrate to primeval chaos in the centre of the globe?

I remember also thinking of the enormous weight of those waters. I had seen strong men, in the surf, prostrated by a single wave. I had myself often been exhausted with a few brief struggles against the in-coming billows. Yet the mass of water, which had thus taken away my breath, was a million times smaller than that which was now pouring over the Falls. Under this awful sledge-hammer, if I may call it such, it would be my fate, in an instant more, to be macerated alive. The weight of that mass of water I knew to be incalculable. Arithmetic shrank back appalled from estimating it in pounds. Yet it would bray me as in a mortar.

All these things passed through my mind with inconceivable rapidity. In sudden deaths the intellect is always supernaturally quickened. I cannot better give an idea of the minute fraction of time consumed, than by saying it was about equal to the period, when one discharges a pistol, between the flash and the report. In that inappreciable period I had experienced all these emotions.

As I felt myself falling, and still falling, I thought of those I loved and who loved me. Then it was that the agony of death came upon me.

— I woke, with a gasp and pang. I woke, not to another world, but to this.

I was lying on the grass, beside the little bay where I had first seated myself, and the bees were humming, the leaves whispering, and the waves softly lapping the shore. I had fallen asleep, when contemplating the rapids; and all afterward was a dream.

Yet I give it as a real experience. For had I

been actually swept away by the current, and hung poised over the awful abyss, I could not have agonized—I must coin the word—more, or differently.

And I knew thenceforth what few ever know, the full meaning of the prayer in the Litany, for deliverance from sudden death.

A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

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A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

ONCE upon a time, there were three maiden sisters, who lived as comfortably and contentedly as it is possible for maiden sisters to live. Strangers, who drove about the outskirts of the country town where the Misses Traston resided, invariably asked who owned the very pretty dwelling, half cottage, half villa, with the lovely bay-windows and veranda, and well-kept grounds; and were as invariably answered that "three old maids lived there." Some of the younger ones sighed that so picturesque-looking a place should have fallen to the lot of three old maids: just as though old maids had forfeited all claim to the good things of this life; and the answer seemed, on the whole, to meet with general disapprobation.

Little this mattered, however, to the three ladies who were so comfortably provided for, and whose position in the society of Centertown rendered their notice an honor. They were long past the bloom of youth, and not one of them could, by any possibility, have ever laid claim to beauty; and yet there was something very pretty and touching in their affection for, and unbounded confidence in each other. There was such a variety, too, in their appearance and characters, that the usual monotony of three maiden-sisters was quite done away with.

Miss Sybilla, the eldest, was a tall, angular lady, with very nice dark curls, that showed as yet but few silver threads; and a sensible sort of face, that her two admiring sisters pronounced "very intellectual." Miss Sybilla was the scribe of the family, and usually received and answered all the letters. She was also considered to possess great conversational powers, and to show to much advantage in receiving and entertaining company. In short, Miss Sybilla might be called the head and front of the Traston sisters, as they seemed to prefer obtaining glimpses of life from beneath her sheltering wings.

Miss Pamela was an invalid—partly because she couldn't help it, and partly because there was a sort of *eclat* in being different from other people; her chief difficulty was in her head, which threatened to "split open" nearly every hour in the twenty-four, but which seemed to keep together pretty securely, nevertheless. The invalid always wore a white dress, summer

and winter; and kept a diary, snatches of which had been seen by stealth, and which elevated the two other sisters to such a degree that they declared, "If dear Pamela should ever be taken from them, they would publish that diary for the good of the human race."

But "dear Pamela" lived on, in spite of the threatened fissures in her head, and managed to subsist very well on thin, but frequent shavings of bread-and-butter, delicate slices of tongue, and libations of egg-nogg and whiskey-punch. These last were much recommended by Dr. Tormesbury for a delicate constitution; and Miss Pamela was certainly very ethereal-looking.

Miss Clarissa was an exceedingly stout damsel of forty, who, being of a practical turn, considered herself very inferior to her gifted sisters. She attended faithfully to the house-keeping department, and got up the delicious cakes and puddings that met with such enthusiastic approbation from those who were fortunate enough to partake of them. The greatest trial of Miss Clarissa's life had been in having too much flesh upon her bones; but the more the poor thing walked and starved herself the fatter she grew. She was also afflicted with an excess of color, that bordered on a purplish tinge; and the slightest allusion to either of these defects filled her sensitive soul with anguish. She waited like a spaniel upon Miss Pamela, and bowed down in admiring homage before Miss Sybilla's mind, little deeming that she, herself, was the main stay and balance of the family.

"The establishment" consisted of an elderly servant-woman and a small colored person, whom the former supposed to have been born for her especial torment. A man, who worked about the garden and grounds during the day, and retired to the bosom of his family at night-fall, seemed to partake of the general respectability and propriety, and to demean himself with great circumspection and decorum.

The three sisters had each her own separate room, into which none of the others ever thought of entering without knocking; being, therefore, separated at night, they met at the breakfast-table with mutual inquiries after each other's health and well-being. It was, "I hope you

rested well, sister Sybilla?" "Thank you—how did you pass the night, sister Clarissa?" and, perhaps, on rare occasions, "Did you sleep well, sister Pamela?" to which sister Pamela always shook her head, and looked like the woman who said, "*Sleep! one of my noble race sleep!* I never did such a thing in my life!" for Miss Pamela particularly prided herself on not sleeping; and yet, strange to say, she was generally the last one to hear anything that occurred at night. She seldom appeared at the breakfast-table, however; but preferred lying on her sofa, with a cup of chocolate, conning over some "opening thoughts" for her diary.

One pleasant morning in June, the three were sitting together around the breakfast-table, that looked very inviting with its old-fashioned silver and transparent china; while through the open bay-window came the real Juno odor of roses and honeysuckle, and beyond there was a lovely rural view of lawn and shrubbery.

Miss Sybilla was pondering over a letter that had just been received; and the two sisters looked expectant.

"From brother Isaac," announced the elder lady, at length. "He wishes to send Helen to us for awhile."

It is a custom with some people, on receiving any information, to look as though they never had heard anything so astonishing before, and never expected to again; and the two younger Misses Trafton now wore this expression of countenance to such a degree that Miss Sybilla felt justified in remarking,

"It does not seem to me at all out of the way that brother Isaac should wish his daughter to see something of her aunts."

"Certainly not," said Miss Pamela, promptly. "How old is Helen now?"

"She was seven when she left us," was the reply, "and that is—let me see—twelve years ago."

"Then she is nineteen," said Miss Clarissa, who had an arithmetical turn. "How strange it will seem to see the child again after so long a separation. Dear me! how well I remember crying my eyes out when she was taken away."

"How well I remember her racing through my poor head with those terrible shoes of hers!" exclaimed Miss Pamela. "I thought that child would really set me crazy."

"What I am thinking of," said Miss Sybilla, with a smile, "is those funny attempts of hers at learning to spell. The pictures led her astray, and she would spell, 's-h-a-d—codfish! S-h-o-t—bullet-bag!' and so on."

"She was a dear little thing," said Miss

Clarissa, tenderly, "although she did scream and kick at being washed and dressed; and I only wish that she could come back to us just as she went, with those heavenly blue eyes and golden curls."

"Do you not remember, Pamela," asked the elder sister, "that you were one day reading aloud some novel, in which the heroine was an orphan, and met with all kinds of misfortunes from having no one to take care of her, when Helen, who seemed to be absorbed with her dolls in another part of the room, edged herself up to us, and suddenly inquired, 'Didn't she have any aunts?'"

Breakfast cooled while the maiden aunts called up reminiscences of the little sunbeam who had gladdened their home for five years, and completely won their hearts with her sweet ways; and that she should now be coming back to them a woman, with a woman's talent, perhaps, for making idols and finding them clay, was a state of things that seemed difficult to realize.

Isaac Trafton seemed born for a traveler, as he had been a wanderer upon the face of the earth ever since his sisters could remember him, only coming home on occasional visits—on one of which he left behind him his motherless child of two years old for an indefinite period. On marrying a second time, and journeying to the far West, he insisted upon taking the little Helen with him, much to the grief of the faithful aunts, who dreaded all sorts of dangers for their tender charge.

"Brother Isaac" was not a good correspondent, and letters were few and far between, leaving his sisters with very little idea of his affairs; until this epistle, dated from Chicago, where he had resided for the past year, informed them that Helen would like to make them a long visit, if convenient to receive her. The advent of a young girl in a household of spinsters causes a sort of consternation, and a general feeling of not being equal to the occasion. How to interest or amuse her, or to make her feel that she has not taken leave of the human species altogether, are questions of grave import. Would she be grave or gay, pretty or ugly?

Miss Clarissa declared that so pretty a child would have no right to be an ugly girl; while Miss Pamela discouragingly remarked that the prettiest children were always ugliest when grown; and Miss Sybilla, ignoring the subject of beauty altogether, "only hoped that the child would have some intellect."

Catharine, who ruled the kitchen, and nearly

the whole household besides, highly disapproved of the interloper; and "Crissy," a corruption of Lucretia, looked forward to the arrival with that intense, but subdued delight in the prospect of something going on, which only a young African can experience.

The prettiest spare room, the one with pink cottage-furniture, and windows opening toward the hills, was put in readiness for the young visitor; and seeing the tasteful bouquet arranged by Miss Pamela, Crissy stole in surreptitiously with a huge peony, which she placed conspicuously on the mantle, and then stepped back a few paces to admire the effect.

The omnibus from the "Prospect House," quite a pretentious hotel, brought the young traveler to the Misses Trafton's door; and each aunt in succession, according to the law of priority, clasped in her arms a bundle of veils, shawls, and traveling-baskets, that seemed affectionately disposed, and quite overcome by the meeting.

When Helen's pretty face emerged into full view, the aunts were gratified to perceive that she abundantly fulfilled the promise of her childhood. Her features were delicately cut, like a cameo, and the tint on her rounded cheek had the effect of a light shining through alabaster. A golden curl, that seemed to have escaped from its fellows, just back of her left ear, gave a peculiar style to her beauty, and so impressed the appreciative Crissy, (who stood drinking in her charms all tea-time, instead of waiting upon the table,) that, at the first convenient opportunity, she managed to collect together enough refractory wool to make a pipe-stem arrangement in humble imitation of Helen's golden tress.

But it was a long time before the visitor was peacefully seated at the tea-table. There was so much to hear and tell; so many eager questions from the three aunts, who were all in a state of most unusual excitement, that the ordinary routine of life seemed in danger of being forgotten. Miss Sybilla made a little speech to her niece, in which she welcomed her return to the "dear haunts of her childhood;" and which was, in some respects, as figurative as that memorable one of Mr. Micawber's to David Copperfield; but Miss Pamela and Miss Clarissa looked highly appreciative, and were evidently persuaded that it was just the thing.

There was a quietness and reserve about Helen that rather puzzled her aunts, even in these first hours of meeting; a something that seemed to say, in spite of her respectful manner,

that she was no longer a child, and did not expect to be treated as such. Miss Pamela, who considered herself to possess some sort of a key that gained her admission into the innermost soul of those with whom she came in contact, suddenly beckoned her niece into a corner, and whispered, "Are you engaged?"

A bright rosy color mounted over every visible portion of the pearly skin, while a flush of indignation, perhaps, lighted up the dark-blue eyes; but the tone was composed and distinct in which she answered, "No, aunt—I am not engaged."

Aunt Pamela frowned, and made telegraphic signals that this was "strictly confidential"—she dearly loved a little mystery; but Miss Sybilla had heard enough to interpose her authority.

"I am surprised at you, sister," she remarked, in high displeasure, "for putting such notions into the child's head; of course she is not engaged, or brother Isaac would have notified us of so important a step. It is quite time enough for her to think of such things when she is twenty-five."

Helen was considerably amused, as "twenty-five" appeared to her in quite a different light from what it did to her maiden aunt, being set down in school-girl idiom as "awfully old;" but Miss Pamela was quite crushed by the reproof, and the housekeeping sister hastened to restore the general equanimity by a proposal to adjourn to the dining-room.

In spite of the tempting cakes and biscuit of Miss Clarissa's most popular description, the traveler ate very little, which inconsistent behavior for a girl of nineteen threw her anxious relatives into a state of consternation.

"When I was your age," said Miss Clarissa, frankly, "I could almost devour a loaf of fresh bread at a sitting; and as to resisting pickles, it was not to be thought of!"

"Perhaps," replied Helen, with a smile, "if I had my little, high chair here again, and my wicker mat before me, I might do better."

Crissy retired to the kitchen in a state of admiring rapture with the visitor, for which she was most cruelly snubbed by Catharine.

"Handsome is that handsome does," observed the kitchen autocrat; "and any young lady that turns up her nose at Miss Clarissa's waffles, and the best preserves brought out to do her honor—to say nothing of all the rounds of cream-toast that I burnt my face over—don't amount to much in my opinion, not if she was first cousin to the queen. I suppose her bein' so white has taken your eye; but as I ain't

black, I don't admire taller candles. If she don't eat slate-pencils, she must be in love."

That night, long after her sensible aunts were in bed, Helen sat dreaming in the pretty alcove-window of her room, and gazing on a bit of pasteboard in her hand, on which the shadow of a gentleman's face was permanently fixed. The moon was at its full, and as the young lady sat in the broad light, some lunar influence may have moved her to the proceeding of pressing her lips to the shadowy semblance of mustached lips on the pasteboard. It may have been her father's photograph; or, perhaps, Catharine was right, after all.

The sisters were soon in possession of all the facts respecting those twelve years of absence, which Helen seemed disposed to communicate.

She had had, on the whole, a pleasant home with her father and step-mother; and the latter, while inspiring no enthusiastic love, had evidently been kind in a good-humored, indifferent way, and had sought to make Helen enjoy the pleasures of dress and visiting, in which she so much delighted. Her father's house was gay and hospitable, and gentlemen found it an agreeable resort; but no mention of any favored youth found place in the young girl's narrations; and her aunts were quite at a loss to account for her pale cheeks and unsatisfactory appetite.

Miss Sybilla said little on the subject, but she was evidently taking observations, and revolving some mighty plan in her head which was not yet fully developed.

Meanwhile, Helen conducted herself as naturally as though she were not an object of anxious consideration, and fell into the quiet household ways as though they were her ways, with the amiable aptitude for accommodating herself to circumstances that a few favored people possess.

Aunt Sybilla had a fondness for little mats, and knicknacks of that description, and Helen's indefatigable crochet-needle threatened to convert the parlor into a fancy fair; aunt Pamela doated on poetry and "elegant extracts," and Helen was sure to discover all the gems in the papers, and cut them out for her benefit; while Miss Clarissa's hobby was receipts, which Helen procured in some mysterious manner, much to her satisfaction.

She worked in the garden and in the kitchen, read to Miss Pamela, won over Catharine, and bewitched Crissy in such a manner, that she was accused by the kitchen oracle of not knowing whether she stood on her head or her heels. It must be confessed, however, that as scolding

seemed to be Catharine's native dialect, when addressing her youthful assistant, the cuticle of that young person's sensitiveness had become rather hardened by the process; and she was able to receive a good "blowing-up" without any particular feeling of discomfort.

Miss Sybilla was kindly bent on entertaining her young niece to the best of her ability; and the worthies of Centertown were encouraged to call, and make the visitor feel at home. The maiden aunts were both relieved and puzzled by Helen's unlooked-for manner of taking things and people generally. She was perfectly at her ease, and apparently quite satisfied in the society of people of all ages, sexes, and dispositions; and her manner was precisely the same to a young man of twenty-five, to his grandmother, or to his niece of six.

She talked very little, but seemed to enter into every one's mood of the moment; and gained at once a most enviable popularity. Her very lovely face had much to do with this; for the remark, that "beauty is but skin-deep," applies equally well to ugliness; and yet the popular taste, from time immemorial, has been in favor of even this thin coating of comeliness.

Dr. Tormesbury, the medical adviser, whose skill had for several years kept Miss Pamela's head from splitting into fragments, was lost in admiration of the very pretty young visitor, and always spoke of Helen as "her of Troy." It was not only the name that brought up visions of the Grecian beauty who made so much trouble a few centuries ago, but the perfect harmony between the name and its possessor. The gentle, girlish dignity that sat enthroned upon the lovely features, and spoke in every movement of the graceful figure, was in itself a charm; and to have imagined Helen flirting, or giggling, or conducting herself after the manner of nineteen, generally, would have seemed a perfect absurdity.

Miss Sybilla was not a little pleased, and her ruffled plumage considerably soothed by her niece's considerate manner of conducting herself toward her "elders and betters." Miss Trafston, Miss Clarissa Trafston, and Miss Helen Trafston, had gone by special invitation to visit the Conservatories of a rich old bachelor, who made a practice of devoting himself to the prettiest girls that crossed his path. In returning from their walk around the grounds, Miss Clarissa had entered the open door, and the deferential host stood ready to bow Helen in; but stepping gracefully aside, with the remark, "After my aunt, sir," she gave precedence to Miss Sybilla, who was just quivering with in-

dignation at Mr. Bimley's strange want of attention.

Helen was received into greater favor than ever; but after that Mr. Bimley wondered in vain at the frosty temperature of the Misses Traftons' hitherto hospitable domicil. He had been unconsciously weighed and found wanting; and well it is for most of us that a pair of scales is not always at hand.

A week or two of this quiet life passed on, and the aunts were unable to decide whether Helen was happy or otherwise. She talked very little of the past, and seemed to have fitted into her niche of the little household as though she were in no hurry to leave it. She found plenty of duties, and executed them faithfully; but, perhaps, the most distasteful one consisted in those confidential talks with aunt Pamela. Confidential, however, on one side only; for Helen had nothing to communicate; and the burden of Miss Pamela's confidence was, that "it was so hard to a sensitive nature not to be understood."

In what sense she was not understood Helen could never make out; for it seemed to be a generally accepted fact in the household that nothing was to be expected of Miss Pamela beyond the role of interesting invalid, as Dr. Tormesbury had repeatedly assured them that her mind was too much for her body; if so, it would seem that her body must be very weak, indeed.

Miss Pamela talked to Helen extensively of her feelings, and assured her that she was all nerves; which Helen, not being an anatomist, received in good faith. At another time, she described herself as "all soul," which the fact of her being visibly in a material world would fully contradict; and then she would dwell so affectionately and kindly on all her ailments, with their various symptoms and effects; and what Dr. Tormesbury said and prescribed on every separate occasion, that Helen became quite wearied out and tired in brain, to think of some expedient for corking up this everlasting flow of talk.

Dr. Tormesbury, who figured so largely in these one-sided conversations, was a stout, cheerful-looking bachelor, who had entered the world somewhere about the time Miss Pamela first opened her eyes upon this "Pilgrim's Progress of a vale;" but, nevertheless, he was in the habit of apostrophizing his interesting patient as "my dear child"—a fatherly habit so confirmed, that he was quite likely to address his venerable grandmother, if he had one, in the same style. Helen was quite amused

to hear from her aunt that she looked upon Dr. Tormesbury in a fatherly light; but after a few such confidential chats, she ceased to be surprised at anything from aunt Pamela.

"I don't like the looks of her of 'Troy,'" observed the doctor, at one of his protracted sittings.

Miss Pamela was surprised, for she had thought, with considerable pity for the weakness of so sensible a man in other respects, that the doctor had been quite blinded by the looks of "her of Troy."

"I mean," he continued, "that this beauty, which gives us so much pleasure to look upon, is of too ethereal a cast; there is not enough of our pretty young friend."

"The Traftons are not usually a coarse-looking race," replied Miss Pamela, with a slight tone of displeasure. "Helen's waist and mine are about the same size, I think."

"My dear child," remonstrated the doctor, (Miss Pamela was soothed at once,) "we don't expect so much of *you* in the way of matter. You know what is said about the most valuable goods coming in the smallest parcels? But with respect to Miss Helen, who does not strike me as extraordinary, except in the way of beauty—and there is enough of *that* to balance ten Troys—"

But Miss Pamela was looking steadfastly at nothing, and never rewarded the doctor's quickness of analogy in thus confounding things new and old; so that he was fain to propitiate his half-offended auditor.

"Have you ever amused yourself by tracing family resemblances?" queried the doctor.

Miss Pamela was still a little frosty—she could not say that she ever had.

"It is a favorite occupation of mine," he continued, in a sprightly tone; "but it is not every one that has an eye to detect them. I suppose, now, that your sisters have never spoken of the similarity of profile in Miss Helen and yourself?"

As the similarity between a very irregular set of features and a decidedly Grecian outline is not usually very striking, it was quite probable that they had not. The right chord, however, was touched, and the patient brightened considerably under these skillful manipulations.

She even informed Helen that it was her duty to place herself under Dr. Tormesbury's professional care; but when her niece calmly inquired, "What for?" it seemed rather awkward to tell her that the doctor did not approve of her looks. She, therefore, replied rather

vaguely that it would do her a great deal of good.

"But I am good enough already," said Helen, with a smile; "at least in a physical way."

Miss Pamela shook her head, which is a safe resource when argument fails; and Helen began to fear that her aunt might be a monomaniac on this subject, and entertain the design of quietly worrying her into being an invalid. She could not even say to herself that she was well—for she often had a troublesome headache, that only her natural energy and determination enabled her to overcome; and lately her side pained her on the smallest exertion. Miss Clarissa had threatened to get out her set of doll's dishes for her benefit, if she did not try to eat more like a reasonable being—and altogether the case was rather strong against her.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tormesbury, who was really kind-hearted, and quite concerned to see so pretty and lovable a young girl fading before his very eyes, roused Miss Sybilla by a statement of his fears, until that vigorous lady resolved upon what she called "taking a stand." She thought the matter well over; and then dragged Helen out for a constitutional walk of a mile before breakfast for a week in succession.

This, instead of answering the desired purpose, prostrated the unwilling invalid on the sofa for the remainder of the day; and then Miss Sybilla poured raw eggs down her throat, mixed with wine and nutmeg. She felt naturally indignant at the ill success of her doctoring; but what physician ever yet succeeded who took it for granted that his patient had scarlet fever, when a little knowledge of antecedents would have unfolded something quite different?

Miss Sybilla was working in total ignorance of certain moonlight performances with a dangerous-looking piece of pasteboard.

One morning a visitor came in, and uttered a few chance words that settled Helen's fate for life.

The visitor was one of those brisk old women, kind, industrious, and self-denying, who are invaluable in sickness or trouble, and pleasant and desirable at all times. Mrs. Rolles had taken a great fancy to Helen, and peered at her over her spectacles in an interested, inquiring sort of way, as though she did not quite understand her. Her cottage was just opposite; and there she lived, with her one handmaiden, on her limited means, always busy as a bee, and always with an open hand

and heart for all who were in need, of whatever sort or kind.

There was something particularly sympathetic in Mrs. Rolles, and Helen felt very much drawn to her. Their real acquaintance dated from a certain morning, when Helen went over on an errand for her aunt, and was directed by the servant to the back kitchen.

A vile odor assailed her sense of smell as she approached the spot; and utterly unable to account for it from anything that she could recollect in her experience, she looked timidly around for some elucidation of the mystery. A figure, in decided undress, reminding her strongly of one of the witches in Macbeth, bent over a huge caldron that stood on the cooking-stove, poking up its contents with an old broom-handle, and a sublime disregard of the unsavory smell that issued therefrom.

Helen recognized the eyes and spectacles, and asked, in a comical tone of dismay, "Mrs. Rolles, what is that?"

"That," my dear, is soap-fat," replied the old lady, who believed in coming directly to the point; "or, rather, it is going to be."

"But what a horrible smell!" remonstrated the uninitiated visitor.

"Is it, my dear?" said the old lady, cheerfully. "That, I suppose, is because you haven't had enough of it yet. I remember that my sister, who lived in the country, once took an orphan girl to bring up, named Merilly. Now Merilly had an unpleasant trick of twisting her shoulders, and saying that 'she didn't like' things; when sister would tell her 'that was because she hadn't done it often enough, and she must do it until she did like it.' One day she was picking up potatoes to fill a small basket, and doing it with many twitches and jerks, and the usual remark that 'she didn't like it'; but, as soon as the basket was filled, sister quietly upset it, and told her to begin again. This was done sixteen times, when Merilly looked up brightly, and said, 'I don't mind it at all now—I'd just as lief do it as not!' 'Very well,' replied sister, 'then you're done it enough; you can go and do something else.'"'

Helen was very much amused at the narrative, and the old lady's manner of telling it, poking away at her soap-fat all the time; and she said, pleasantly,

"I suppose you think, then Mrs. Rolles, that I should be treated just as Merilly was? Do you think that, if I spent the day here, I should get to like the smell of soap-fat?"

"I don't know," replied the old lady, dryly;

"but I think discipline is an excellent thing to prevent people from consulting their likes and dislikes. We were not put here for that."

"I cannot think," said Helen, laughing, "of anything better calculated to take the romance and nonsense out of a person than the very employment in which you are now engaged."

Mrs. Rolles looked as though "romance and nonsense" were weaknesses with which she was altogether unacquainted; and Helen exclaimed suddenly,

"But there is really no necessity, Mrs. Rolles, for me to make soap-fat—so, why should I do what is so particularly distasteful to me?"

"My dear," said the old lady, resting on her oars, which, in this case, proved to be a broom-handle, "I don't say that you should; but there are other 'distasteful' things in the world besides making soap-fat—and we cannot go through life gathering flowers."

Helen was silent for a moment, thinking of the old lady's solemn manner and comical employment; feeling, too, that she must seem a very useless piece of goods to the practical dame; but she rallied again to inquire,

"Mrs. Rolles, is it really necessary for you to do anything so disagreeable? Is it not just as cheap to buy your soap-fat ready made, as to buy the materials and make it?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Rolles, in the dry tone that always implies being master of the position, "do you know the price of soap-fat?"

Helen was obliged to confess her ignorance. She had looked upon soap-fat rather as an article that was begged, borrowed, or stolen, and did not remember to have seen in the Commercial List, that it was either "lively," "easy," or "heavy."

"It is seven dollars a barrel," said the old lady, preparing to "pour off."

"And what do the materials cost?" asked Helen, not yet disposed to "give in."

"One dollar."

Shame alone kept the visitor from inquiring into the legitimate uses of soap-fat; but she had rather an idea that it did not enter into the composition of any article of diet.

Aunt Sybilla's errand came near being forgotten, as Helen sat there in Mrs. Rolles' kitchen, quite unmindful of the "horrible smell" that had been so apparent at first. The old lady talked, and the young one listened; and much practical good sense, and extracts from a well-spent life, were stored away in Helen's memory, with a keen enjoyment of the originality of her companion's manner and occupation.

After that the two became, as Catharine phrased it, "as thick as two peas in a pod." Helen was fertile at inventing excuses for spending an hour with Mrs. Rolles; and the old lady welcomed her young friend with a warm, motherly kiss, that Helen learned to look for as a matter of course.

It was Mrs. Rolles who, suddenly, one morning, in answer to Miss Sybilla's chapter of difficulties on the subject of Helen's health, explained, "I should like to see you in a wet pack!"

Unaffected horror sat upon the countenances of all her hearers—for the Misses Trafston had a well-bred contempt for Water-Cures, and all modern innovations; while Helen laughingly replied,

"Why, Mrs. Rolles, that is perfectly barbarous! What have I done to deserve such treatment?"

"I believe," said the old lady, solemnly, "that a wet pack would be the making of you—all of you, in fact," and she looked yearningly toward Miss Pamela, as though longing to make a mummy of her without delay.

The invalid assumed a most resolute expression of countenance, as she remarked, witheringly, that she had a perfect contempt for mountebanks and charlatans; and that a learned, properly educated man, like Dr. Tormesbury, was alone capable of understanding a delicate case like hers.

Poor Miss Clarissa wondered quietly what "a wet pack" was capable of doing toward reducing flesh and color; but Mrs. Rolles extinguished her rising hopes by proceeding to quote the case of a cousin of hers, who went to one of the wet-packing institutions all skin and bone, and returned all flesh and blood.

"In fact, quite made over," added the old lady, as though she had been a renovated garment; "and although I wouldn't give sixpence for Miss Pamela's constitution—I look upon her as a perfect wreck, from the use of stimulants, and the want of energy and exercise. I really think that, at a Water-Cure, they might even do something for her."

Miss Pamela was too indignant to speak; and more to cover her anger than to gain information, Helen asked,

"But what do they do at Water-Cures, Mrs. Rolles? Don't they starve and drown you?"

Miss Sybilla, too, had a vague idea that Water-Cures were institutions where human beings were treated like superfluous kittens and puppies; but she was open to conviction, and of an inquiring turn of mind. Mrs. Rolles

assured them that "you might go there and not see a bath from one week's end to another," which did not strike her hearers in the most favorable point of view, as most people have a prejudice in favor of seeing one some time during the week; "and as to starving, if you were willing to eat like a civilized being, there was always enough of it."

This was one of the old lady's hobbies, and she held forth on the subject for an hour or so, leaving Miss Sybilla almost convinced that it was just the place for Helen.

"But there is really nothing the matter with me, aunt," said that refractory damsel. "I do not know but that I should rather enjoy visiting such a place, if I could go *only* as a visitor—but not otherwise."

Miss Pamela was loud in indignant disapproval, and informed Dr. Tormesbury, on the first opportunity, that Mrs. Rolles and sister Sybilla were going to kill Helen.

"Rather a summary way of disposing of a puzzling case," said the doctor, with an amused smile. "When is the little affair to come off?"

But when Miss Pamela said solemnly that sister Sybilla had got an abominable Water-Cure establishment in her head, and couldn't be reasoned out of it, the doctor's feelings found vent in a hearty laugh.

"I really believe," said he, in answer to Miss Pamela's reproving look, "that it will be the very best thing for both of them; and fair Helen of Troy, who, in my opinion, wants nothing but change and diversion, is not in the slightest danger of being killed. Let them go, say I—they have my forgiveness and my blessing."

This jocular way of treating such a dreaded proceeding was at first a surprise to the invalid, and then a relief—a whisper or two being added, that caused her to look upon it in a different light; but she glanced up with an expression intended for archness, as she inquired,

"Perhaps you agree with Mrs. Rolles, that it would be a good thing for *me*?"

Miss Pamela heard something about porcelain vases, and the quick eye of love, and tender handling, which last being illustrated by a substantial palm on her own delicate digits, she did not stop to inquire whether it was professional or otherwise.

Miss Sybilla wrote quite lengthily to "brother Isaac" on the subject of his daughter's extreme delicacy of appearance, and expatiated on the excellent advice she had received respecting her; and brother Isaac wrote in reply to Miss Sybilla, giving his full consent to try the benefit of Water-Cure treatment for Helen, and

enclosing a circular from one of the most respectable establishments.

Helen laughed a little at the idea, but seemed rather resigned on the whole; especially as Miss Sybilla declared her intention of proceeding very cautiously, and going at first as "parlor-boarders."

It was an event in the lives of the three spinsters that their head should leave on an expedition which seemed, to all but herself, of a very doubtful tendency; and Miss Clarissa looked after her niece with a regretful sigh that she should have to go so far in quest of what she would so willingly divide with her, if practicable—flesh and color. She revolved the puzzle that has troubled many other heads; why is it, as a general thing, that people are always burdened with what they do not want, or kept from the enjoyment of what they *do* want?"

"In the hereafter, angels may
Roll the stone from the door away"

of that, and many another puzzle; and the whys and whores will stand forth clearly to our wondering eyes.

Dr. Tormesbury drove the two ladies to the station on a cool, August morning; and warned "her of Troy" that, if she put them all to so much trouble without getting the roses for which she was sent, and the ability to eat good, wholesome bread-and-butter with *any* one, her sentence would be transportation for life. Of what kind he did not say; but Helen laughed, and informed him that she had no idea of going to the "Western Water-Cure" for nothing.

The only incident that occurred on the journey was a conflict with aunt Sybilla, who insisted upon jumping through a car-window that could not possibly have accommodated her, in consequence of some alarm about the engine; but this little difficulty adjusted, they proceeded smoothly to their destination, which they reached quite early on the morning after their departure.

The travelers gazed inquiringly at the front of the establishment, as though expecting some unusual development; but all that met their gaze was a comfortable-looking building, with a most inviting piazza, and a sign on one side, with the words: "Dr. Mulbrie, Hydropathist."

They entered a wide hall, furnished with straw-matting and cano-sofas, and enlivened by cheerful pictures of stray hearts and lungs on rather a gigantic scale.

"Do you know," whispered Miss Sybilla, confidentially, "I have always thought that there was something the matter with my heart, and this will be a good time to have it ascer-

tained. How is yours, Helen? I dare say that is the first question he will ask you. Dear me, child! do sit down—that looks like a rush of blood to the head."

The good lady had just settled her flame-colored niece on one of the sofas, when the proprietor of the establishment made his appearance, evidently trying to look benevolent. Helen examined him, in a quiet way, from a corner of her downcast eyes, and came to the conclusion that he was not a very good advertisement of the success of Water-Curo treatment. He was a moderate-sized man, with a fallow-candle complexion, eyes that seemed to be all whites, long, dingy-looking hair, and a general appearance like faded calico. His voice was squeaky, and his movements awkward in the extreme.

Miss Sybilla had become very nervous; and she whispered, rather than said, "We have not come as patients, only as boarders, if you can give us a comfortable room."

"Our rooms are *all* comfortable," replied the doctor, in a manner that quite awed the poor lady; "but if the young lady has any heart difficulty, (ah! I thought so from that sudden flushing,) it will be better for her not to go up many stairs."

Feeling very much like one in a dream, and wondering if there was a conspiracy against her, Helen followed her aunt, who followed the doctor, into a good-sized room, that struck them with a dreadful air of bareness.

"Air—light—water," said the doctor, as though summoning the articles before him; "these we put against curtains, paperings, easy-chairs, and the balance is decidedly in our favor."

It was, indeed; for the prohibited articles can only be had in return for talismanic slips of paper, while the unsubstantial referred to are within the reach of all.

"Carpets," continued the doctor, as Miss Sybilla glanced involuntarily at the floor, "are decidedly unwholesome; they foster dirt and disease. Our beds are arranged with special reference to spinal disease, which I look upon as the direct offspring of hair-mattresses."

Helen could not help thinking that sleepless nights would be "the direct offspring" of the couch before her; but she thought of Mrs. Roles and "discipline," and kept her ideas to herself.

"The patients," said Dr. Mulbrie, "are about to begin their exercises in the gymnasium; and if you feel disposed to pay us a visit, when you have laid aside your things, we shall be happy

to welcome you. You will have no difficulty in finding the gymnasium, it is just beyond the long hall."

After the doctor's departure, Miss Sybilla and her niece glanced rather comically at each other; but the elder lady rallied to remark that, after all, no one expected to find a Water-Curo exactly like other places: and things were really not so bad as they might be.

"True," said Helen, with a mischievous glance at the flat-looking bed, with its Liliputian pillows, "we might have had no bed at all, you know."

There was no difficulty in discovering the gymnasium; but there was considerable difficulty in discovering what all the wild-looking people in it were about. Such singular antics it had never been the fortune of the two ladies to witness; and the contrast of their infantile amusements with the solemn, middle-aged appearance of most of the performers, was ludicrous in the extreme.

As Miss Sybilla and her niece entered, the patients were engaged in throwing bags of beans at each other, which long practice seemed to enable them to catch at the right moment; but the spectators involuntarily dodged these formidable phylethings. The long-haired proprietor graciously waved them to a pine-bench against the wall, when Helen gazed at the bare rafters and sides, and thought the apartment uncommonly like a garret that had been moved down to the first floor for the sake of convenience.

After the beans, came balls of a huge size, that bounded up and down, after the fashion of balls generally, and struck people everywhere, causing much noisy laughter.

Then a huge rope was produced, and the active doctor divided his forces into two separate groups, placing the men at one end, and the women at the other—but with a stray woman or two thrown in by way of balance; and on the command being given to pull, all hands pulled, and the men found themselves entirely taken off their equilibrium.

"This would seem to show," said Dr. Mulbrie, who never lost an opportunity of making a remark, "that Water-Curo treatment agrees better with women than with men; but the fact of the case is, that the female *will* is powerful enough to balance a much greater amount of physical strength."

This was received with applause, as he meant it to be; but Helen hated him from that moment. The obnoxious word "female" always excited her ire; and this last offence capped

the climax to the growing aversion which the doctor had inspired from her first glimpse of him.

Suddenly the proprietor said, "Conundrums!" and every individual immediately stood balanced on one foot like a goose, while the doctor asked,

"Why is an elephant like a brick?"

"Because," almost before any one could answer, "they can neither of them climb a tree!"

"Now, here," he continued, blandly, "is something original. Why am I like an island?"

Some venturesome woman suggested, "because he wasn't a Continent;" but the doctor frowned discouragingly, and replied,

"Because I am in the midst of water."

About a dozen such "conundrums," any answer to which would have suited any other question just as well, were given out; and between the question and answer a change of position was made to the other foot. Wherein the advantage of this exercise consisted it was impossible to say; but Helen uncharitably decided that, as there were several other spectators, the doctor had instituted it for the especial display of his own cleverness.

"Now," said the doctor, "I want you all to laugh as hard as ever you can," giving vent at the same time to a peculiar cachinnation that caused Helen to shudder.

"A very pleasant man," whispered Miss Sybilla; "so cheerful and social with his patients—they must be quite attached to him."

Every one laughed, and Helen found herself involuntarily joining in the exercise. The doctor's eye was upon her immediately, and putting his hand on her shoulder, which she jerked away somewhat after the fashion of a petulant child, he said, benignly,

"Come, my dear, we must have you in the circle; you are a good laugher. Stand up, and show us what you can do."

The young lady was too indignant to reply; but Miss Sybilla asked in surprise, "Helen, my dear, did you not hear the doctor speak to you?"

"Perfectly well," said her niece, retaining her seat.

"A little irritable," observed the doctor, compassionately, with an expression as though he could soon make that all right.

Helen felt very much annoyed by the continual stare from those white eyes—for the doctor found himself gazing in rapt admiration at the prettiest face that had ever visited his establishment; and as the first Mrs. Mulbrie had long "dwelt among the scrubs," as he expressed it, he began to think that a second

Mrs. Mulbrie might prove rather an agreeable change.

When dinner-time came, there was not much to tempt the appetite, as the meal consisted principally of "spoon-riddles;" but there were some very well-dressed people at the table, and Helen was quite surprised to see two or three gentlemanly-looking men. The invalids had an uncommon appearance of health, and some of them could boast of as much flesh as Miss Clarissa.

The doctor held forth, which seemed to be a way he had, and gave them a lecture on diet. Warm bread was selected as the especial object of his wrath; and various scientific terms were used to show its exceeding unhealthfulness, until the whole thing seemed to Helen a strange mess of nothing in particular. She could only make out that fresh bread generated gas, which, taken into the stomach, came in contact with the gastric juices, and the natural consequence would be an explosion; but she felt very much disposed to ask the orator if he had ever exploded, or any of his friends; or if he had ever heard of any one that ever knew any one that ever did explode.

She also thought of the old woman in the country, who excused herself to visitors from providing them with any refreshment, by saying that "she had nothing in the house but fresh bread, and that went like a dew." As the doctor's reforms were all to the advantage of his pocket, it seemed not unlikely that the dew-like properties of fresh bread had been taken into consideration.

In the evening, all hands adjourned to the "lecture-room," where the doctor stood on a platform, and drew fearful-looking skeletons and things on a huge black board with amazing celerity and remarkable skill. Miss Sybilla seemed interested and pleased at acquiring an entirely new store of information; but her niece was terribly bored, and not at all sorry to find that nine o'clock was the fashionable bed-time.

"Early to bed and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise!"

said Dr. Mulbrie, as though he were producing an entirely original thing. As the gas, however, was all turned off in the establishment at half-past nine, the doctor was undoubtedly the man who gained the second clause of the promised blessings.

"Helen," said Miss Sybilla, when they had retired to the rocky couch provided for them, "I wish you particularly to remember what Dr. Mulbrie said about lying on your right side first, so that the stomach can be emptied into

the heart; or, perhaps, it was the heart into the stomach, I am not sure which, but I know that it makes a great difference which side you lie on."

"Aunt Sybilla," was the irreverent reply, "I believe that Dr. Mulbrie is both a fool and a knave; and I shall lie on whichever side I choose, if he says that everything in the world empties into my heart. What business is it of his, I should like to know? I perfectly detest that man; and were it not for you and papa, I would not stay here another day."

Miss Sybilla was very much shocked; but she managed to say, "I do hope, Helen, that you will behave as well as you can to Dr. Mulbrie; and I am sure that if you stay here quietly for awhile, you will never regret it."

Poor Miss Sybilla! her words were prophetic in a sense that she had little expected; and Helen was quieted, although she resolutely refused to empty out her heart as her aunt requested.

The latter was evidently in a fair way of becoming a convert to the Water-Cure system; and after a talk with the learned doctor, she became convinced that she had for a long time labored under various unsuspected difficulties. A wet pack was the first prescription; but poor

Miss Sybilla emerged from mummydom more dead than alive.

With her arms tightly bandaged to her sides, and well rolled in wet cloths—with a huge sheet as an outer wrapping—she had been left to her own reflections for an hour, and the unwelcome attentions of a huge spider, that took this opportunity to make various pedestrian excursions over her that were more curious than agreeable. She was entirely at his mercy, being in the unpleasant condition of "Johnny Sands," and the spider lingered affectionately on her face; and, perhaps, grateful as the angel with the moss-rose, concluded to give it an additional charm by spinning a web across it!

The good-natured woman, who did the packing and packing, was plentiful with condolences, when her patient's screams finally brought her to the scene of action; and the doctor coolly remarked that "it was an occurrence that probably would not happen to one person in a thousand."

"Would you like to be that thousandth person?" asked Helen, as her aunt sank on a sofa.

She could not help laughing a little to see how innocently Miss Sybilla had glided into the role of invalid, while she had quietly kept aloof.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

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A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37.

ONE day, as the cars stopped at the station where people got out for the "Western Water-Cure," a young gentleman stepped on the platform to find himself warmly greeted by another gentleman, whose appearance there did not seem particularly to delight him.

"What, in the name of all that's wonderful, are you doing here?" exclaimed the newcomer.

"I might ask the same question of you," replied the other, with a good-natured laugh; "but I only came on business, and am going back in the train to-night."

"I came, too, on business," said the taller one, rather hurriedly; "but the business is rather complicated, and may detain me for some time;" and inwardly thankful that his friend was leaving so soon, he proceeded at once to the Western Water-Cure.

"I would like to know," soliloquized the deserted one, "what crochet Clemdale has got into his head now. What can he be doing at a Water-Cure—the strongest giant of a fellow I ever encountered, and whose grasp is like a perfect vice? Wonders will never cease!"

With these reflections, the subject was dismissed from his mind, after the fashion of men generally, and his whole thoughts were devoted to his business, which, as Jack Bunsby would have phrased it, was "business as *was* business."

The other's "business," however, was not so clear.

Miss Sybilla and her niece were frequently puzzled, in passing the bathing-room, at obtaining glimpses of various contented-looking people sitting in a row, with their feet in tubs of water. A broad, good-natured looking face smiled a welcome, one morning, as the ladies lingered at the open door, and a hearty voice called out,

"Do come in, please—we want some one to talk to us dreadfully! I am Mrs. Lellworth," continued the speaker, "an emaciated creature, as you see; and I am going to have a party to-night, and I want you both to come. Aren't you half starved?"

Miss Sybilla was intensely surprised by this singular address; while Helen struggled with a disposition to laugh, and was glad to find

something that promised amusement in this dull place.

"Sit down," continued the sprightly lady with the submerged feet, "you'll find two empty pails that you can turn bottom upward; and let me give you one piece of advice while you are strangers—don't take to the water in any shape or form; for if you do, like the ducks, you'll never know when you have enough of it. Look at me, now—some part of me is always being half drowned."

Miss Sybilla ventured to ask what was the matter.

"I don't know," was the reply, "what Dr. Mulbrie would call it. I came here, at the recommendation of a friend, to cure chronic headache—and here I have been, off and on, for the last two years. Mr. Lellworth is going crazy with housekeeping, (we have no olive-branches,) and he has just written to inform me that he is eating up all the preserves."

The sentence ended with a merry laugh, as though this were about the funniest thing she had ever heard; but, as if by way of contrast, a sepulchral voice suddenly groaned out,

"Mr. Mintley! Mr. Mintley!"

"Yes, my love," replied a spry gentleman, who seemed to have been standing behind the door waiting for a summons.

"Be ve-ry careful;" and Mr. Mintley lifted the foot tenderly out of the pail, and proceeded to rub them very gently with a towel.

Then Mrs. Mintley, who was a most woe-ful-looking "female," as Dr. Mulbrie would have said, with an orange-colored complexion, and a figure equally devoid of flesh and grace, was assisted from the apartment with the most affectionate solicitude.

"Such devotion!" whispered Mrs. Lellworth. "It is perfectly beautiful! And she was an invalid when he married her."

"What did he marry her for?" asked Miss Sybilla.

"On purpose to have the pleasure of taking care of her," was the reply; "he has told us about it many a time. He says that his whole happiness consists in ministering to her wants."

Helen could not help thinking that people have different ideas of happiness, and won-

dering what kind of a world this would be if people took to marrying all the invalids they encountered, "on purpose to take care of them." She had not discovered anything in Mrs. Mintley that seemed calculated to call forth such chivalrous devotion. That dreadful whine in her voice would upset the patience of most men; but Mrs. Mintley declared that "he loved her very infirmities."

"What is the matter with Mrs. Mintley?" asked Helen. "Is she likely to get well here?"

"Everything is the matter," replied Mrs. Lellworth; "and no human being can get well who does the absurd things that woman does. What do you think, for instance, of swallowing boiling tea?"

The two listeners looked properly shocked; and Mrs. Lellworth continued, "Nothing less will satisfy her; and I do believe her throat is lined with sheet-iron. Tea at all is against the rules of the Institution, you know; but it was insisted upon when they first came, and Dr. Mulbrie, afraid of losing so promising a patient, gave in. Then began a regular hue and cry at meal-times about 'Mrs. Mintley's tea'; it was never hot enough, although I have seen it go up in such a high-pressure condition of steam, that no money could have induced me to put it into my mouth. Still Mrs. Mintley was never satisfied; until the cook declared, in a huff, that if she knew how to make it more than boiling hot, she might just do it herself. Then Mr. Mintley bought a concern for making it in the room; and set to work at it himself. If he doesn't scald his wife to death some day; or, rather, if she doesn't scald herself, I shall be very much mistaken. He says that 'he won't have Arethusa crossed.'"

"Is Dr. Mulbrie really doing her any good?" said Miss Sybilla, anxiously.

"I have my doubts," was the reply; "but I suppose he quiets his conscience with the reflection that he is not doing her any harm."

Miss Sybilla's countenance was expressive of indignation and surprise; but Mrs. Lellworth laughed, as she said, "You don't imagine that any man, particularly one of Dr. Mulbrie's limited range of thought, would get up an establishment like this, and give the whole of his mind to it, as the man said of his cravat, without being fully convinced that it would cure all the ills that human flesh was ever heir to? I am here, not that I have perfect confidence in Dr. Mulbrie, but because I find his style of treatment good for some things—and for the rest, I know how to have my own way. But about the party," she continued; "I want you to get something

to eat—this young lady strikes me as having an unnaturally small appetite."

"I am not fond of saw-dust," said Helen, laughing; "neither do I fancy a diet that is a cross between solids and liquids."

"Water-Cure diet," said Miss Sybilla, reprovingly. "Dr. Mulbrie says that is the most important thing to attend to in building up the constitution; and he attributes the hale appearance of his patients to this very thing."

"Does he?" said Mrs. Lellworth, with a comical look. "I think that the private reunions in each other's apartments, where we are treated to something entirely different from a feast of reason and a flow of soul, have much to do with it. But be sure to come to my room just after tea, and I will show you what they are like."

Helen quite looked forward to the party as an agreeable dissipation; but Miss Sybilla expressed a fear that it was like flying in the face of one's medical attendant.

It was now time to adjourn to the gymnasium, where Miss Sybilla went patiently through with all the exercises, while Helen looked listlessly on, or took part in them, as she felt inclined.

But to-day a stranger appeared among the men, so much younger and handsomer than the generality of Water-Cure patients, that every one's curiosity was excited respecting him. Helen glanced once in that direction, and started and colored violently; but hoping that no one had seen her, she quickly regained her composure.

Somebody had seen her, though; and very soon after, Dr. Mulbrie approached her with the now-comer, and the announcement,

"Miss Traston, from the West; Mr. Rogers, from—from—the same place, I believe."

The doctor's bungling was productive of confused merriment; and the young lady and gentleman seemed much more disconcerted than the case required.

"A very fine young fellow," said the doctor, in a loud whisper to Miss Sybilla. "Most interesting case, too; he tells me that he has an affection of the heart."

"He doesn't look like an invalid," observed Miss Sybilla, surveying the broad chest and manly figure, and the fresh and vivid coloring of the prepossessing face, with a very puzzled air.

"Appearances are often deceitful," replied the doctor, with the concentrated wisdom of half a dozen owls. "People who drop down dead without ever saying, 'by your leave,' are

the very people whom uninitiated ones would pronounce to be cut out for a long life. A great thing, ma'am, is the eye of science."

"You don't think, I hope, that Mr. Rogers is likely to drop down dead in this awful way?" asked the lady, in alarm.

"I can't tell, ma'am, what Mr. Rogers' intentions may be in this respect," was the oracular reply; "but we will hope for the best."

The amused smile that gleamed under Mr. Rogers' mustacho was not called forth by any remark of Helen's; and Miss Sybilla felt afraid to discuss him any more while he remained in such close neighborhood.

"Lennox!" whispered the young lady, reproachfully, "how could you? What do you expect to gain by this?"

"Time will show," was the reply; "and Dr. Mulbrie promises wonders. Meanwhile, I heard, through considerate friends, who have the *entree* to your father's house, that you had been despatched to this Institution; and not thinking that you stood in need of Water-Cure treatment, I feared they might kill you without the protection of a regularly authorized M. D., like myself. This is my season for recreation, you know—and why not spend it here, where I certainly expect to be very much amused?"

"My father's feelings remain unchanged," said Helen, in a dignified manner; "and I must decline any intercourse with you as Dr. Lennox Clemdale."

"But you cannot help associating with me as 'Mr. Rogers?'" he persisted; "that, you know, would excite inquiry of itself, and might cast a reflection upon my character among all these strangers. If your feelings are as unchangable as your father's, I shall be satisfied," he whispered, still lower. "Oh, Helen, darling! it is good to see you again!"

"Aunt Sybilla," said Helen, with most unmerciful suddenness, "have you been introduced to Mr. Rogers?"

And before that gentleman well understood this change of base, he found himself obliged to do the agreeable to the maiden aunt, who, already interested in him through that unsuspected affection of the heart, and desirous of learning all the symptoms of this peculiar disease, began to inquire into it with much volatility.

"Have you any recollection," she asked, anxiously, "of the first feelings that led you to suspect such a difficulty?"

"Yes, madam," was the reply, as Mr. Rogers drew partly on his imagination and partly on his memory. "I have a distinct recollection of

experiencing great restlessness, and an utter inability to interest myself in more than one thing."

"Why, that is very much like Helen," said Miss Sybilla, pondering, "my niece," she explained for the benefit of Mr. Rogers; "the young lady to whom you were introduced. The doctor suspects some trouble of the kind in her case; but she has always been very much opposed to medical advice, and cannot be prevailed upon to listen to Dr. Mulbrie."

It struck Mr. Rogers a little unpleasantly that she was listening most intensely just now; and he couldn't help wondering what she found so interesting in the long-haired doctor's communication.

Miss Sybilla worried her victim for a good half-hour; and then it was time to take a stereotyped nap, as everything was done by rule at the Western Water-Cure. Then there were shower-baths, plunges, soakings, dinner, and tea.

It was now time for Mrs. Lellworth's "party."

This lady's room was one of the pleasantest in the establishment; and in spite of the doctor's predilection for "light, air, water," in place of curtains, carpets, and easy-chairs, she had managed to furnish herself with enough of these obnoxious articles to take away the bare aspect of the house in general; and her plump fingers had a certain daintiness in the arrangement of details, that made itself felt in a very agreeable manner.

About a dozen people were assembled, when Helen and her aunt found their way to the room; and all was friendly ease and hilarity. Stiffness was out of the question where Mrs. Lellworth reigned; and some sat on the bed, and some on cushions; one or two were perched on empty boxes, and others on hastily-improvised seats of all descriptions—a break down now and then only adding to the general merriment.

Mr. Mintley was there, by special permission of Mrs. Mintley, whose room adjoined the scene of entertainment, and who, therefore, sat ready, with an umbrella, to tap on the wall for Mr. Mintley whenever he got particularly interested. As he had married his wife for the express purpose of taking care of her, there seemed no danger of his being disappointed.

Helen followed the movements of the sprightly hostess with her eyes, and admired the tact and ease with which she adapted herself to the occasion. She was really a very pretty picture, with her little fly-away cap of lace-and-ribbon, after the fashion of stage waiting-maids, and the

perfectly-fitting, black silk dress, that toned down her hundred and eighty pounds of flesh and bone so nicely that no one would have suspected her weight. Her pretty auburn hair was tucked back in a careless kind of fashion; and the very fair skin that accompanies such hair was set off by a bright flush of pleasureable excitement.

She cooked oysters in a comical style over a little alcohol lamp; produced pickles, and cheese, and crackers, from a small cupboard; displayed two knives and forks, which, she said, were to be used in turn by the company; and actually prepared some delicious coffee in a most mysterious and remarkable manner.

"My foraging expedition did not yield as much as usual this time," said Mrs. Lellworth; "but you must all remember how very unwholesome it is to eat anything that you like, and console yourselves with the thought that you are escaping some dreadful visitation. You must know," she added, aside to Helen, "that when we feel ourselves to be approaching the stage reached by the horse that tried to live without eating, and only succeeded in dying without it, we are very apt to go upon a 'rampage' in quest of provisions, and sometimes manage to bring to light valuable stores of goodies. But some one must have scoured the place before me to-day, for I could only find a few oysters."

In the goodness of her heart, Mrs. Lellworth suddenly despatched Mr. Mintley with a particularly inviting-looking oyster, that was "just done to a turn," to Mrs. Mintley, with the compliments of the company, and a request that she would eat it while it was hot.

"If I had only thought," said the laughing hostess, when the dutiful husband had departed, "I might have poured some alcohol over it, and set it on fire, which would have made it just about right for Mrs. Mintley."

Everybody was laughing, when Mr. Mintley returned to say that "Mrs. Mintley desired her compliments, and she had enjoyed the oyster very much—but she was afraid that she had not heard the last of it."

This seemed to throw a cloud over Mr. Mintley, who evidently had the oyster on his mind all the evening, and expected to hear from it, too.

Suddenly, in the very midst of the feast, there was a knock at the door; and springing up in dismay, hostess and company hastily gathered together the contraband articles, and stored them away wherever it seemed handy.

"What shall we do with the smell of coffee?"

exclaimed Mrs. Lellworth, excitedly. "I feel it in my bones that old Mulbrie has taken it into his head to pay us a visit of investigation."

When the door was opened, however, instead of "old Mulbrie," it proved to be young Rogers, who stood rather abashed at the very demure looks of the startled conspirators.

"Oh, Mr. Rogers!" said Mrs. Lellworth, in delight, flying toward him as though she had known him all her life, "I am so glad to see you; we thought, of course, it was that horrid old doctor. Do come in, and 'make yourself to hum,' as the country people say. How could you give us such a fright?"

"How? by knocking at the door?" asked the visitor, entering at once into the fun of the thing. "I should have been much more afraid of 'giving you a fright' by walking in without knocking. I could not resist your kind invitation to a perfect stranger, although I feared trespassing upon your good nature."

"Nonsense!" replied the hostess. "We have no time to waste in unmeaning compliments. I asked you because I liked your looks, and you are just the one to enjoy such an entertainment. So make yourself agreeable as fast as possible."

"I hope that does not mean, 'please to begin to be funny!'" deprecates Mr. Rogers, as he found himself, by the merest accident in the world, in close vicinity to Miss Helen Trafton.

"I should think you had translated it, 'please begin to be impudent,'" replied Mrs. Lellworth; "and as a punishment, you shall have a cup of coffee immediately—that is, if I can find it. Where did you put it, Lucilla?"

"Here it is, Carrie," replied the lady addressed, a tall, thin person, who was Mrs. Lellworth's bosom friend, and who looked more like a Water-Cure patient than all the others put together.

Miss Tweedy was considered "very lady-like," which was pretty much all that could be said for her; but Mrs. Lellworth had, probably, discovered virtues in her that were veiled to other eyes.

The oysters and coffee being gotten through with, and Mr. Rogers having complimented the hostess, in the most happy manner, upon her great ingenuity in preparing so charming an entertainment under such adverse circumstances, that lady was unanimously called upon for some music.

The uninitiated, Miss Trafton, Helen, and Mr. Rogers, were rather puzzled by the decided absence of any musical instrument; but after a little hesitation, and much laughter, Mrs. Lellworth insisted upon their all promising not to

look, and began obligingly to play a tune upon her teeth! It was very well done, and had all the charm of originality to three of the party; and every one plainly distinguished the time-honored strains of "Yankee Doodle."

Mr. Mintley, becoming a little elevated from his unwanted libation of coffee, proposed to rival her on his nose, much to the amusement of the company. The feature in question was unusually long, and seemed to possess elastic properties; at any rate, the owner had just succeeded in worrying the "Star Spangled Banner" out of it, and was in the full tide of success, when he suddenly turned pale, and dropping his nose in a panic, made a speedy rush for the next apartment.

The warning tap of an umbrella, in connection with the half-buried thought of that dreadful oyster, upset him completely; and even what he saw, on reaching the next room, was scarcely as bad as what he had imagined. Mrs. Mintley was indulging in a sort of fit, and rolling up the whites of her eyes in a fearful manner; and a hasty bulletin to the revelers caused them to suspend their merriment, and put away the fragments of the feast.

"It is perfectly ridiculous," whispered Mrs. Lellworth, "the way that woman goes on! If she would ever eat and drink like other people, she wouldn't have a convulsion from eating an innocent oyster. I declare, I would really like to give her a good shaking!"

"I am afraid it would be returned to you with interest by Mr. Mintley," said Helen, laughing at Mrs. Lellworth's vehemence.

"Of course it would," was the reply; "but I would be quite willing to take it for the pleasure of giving it. I do hope," she continued, "that they will get Phœbe up, and not the doctor—he would certainly discover what we have been about. Now, Phœbe," she whispered, through the half-open door, to a queer-looking old tadpole of a colored woman who came lumbering along, "if you find out anything, don't breathe a word of it to the doctor—and I shouldn't wonder if you had a new dress one of these days. Do, for goodness' sake! bring Mrs. Mintley to as soon as possible."

"Gracious!" said the sable female, contemptuously, "I ain't skeered a mite. Miss Mintley's allers harf dyin' and comin' to agin, jes' fur all the world like folks noddin' in church and jerkin' theirselves up afore they tumble. I'll fetch her round fast enough. You clar' out!" to Mr. Mintley, "and see if she ain't jes' as spry as ever 'fore you kin say 'Jack Robinson.'"

As Mrs. Mintley's *spryness* was not usually very palpable to the naked eye, there was not much hazarded in this promise; but Mr. Mintley brightened considerably, and had evidently the greatest confidence in Phœbe's skill.

"Oh, Phœbe!" groaned the sufferer, after a vigorous shake or two had been administered, and something poured down her throat, "such dreadful feelings as I've had!"

"What did you *expect* to have?" was the indignant retort. "Sich doin's I never see for sick folks. I know all about it—ain't much goes on in this yere houso without my knowin' it. That Mis' Lellworth's crazy as a loon when she once gits goin'. Now whathev' you bin eatin' of, I want to know? I—stera?"

"Only one, Phœbe," very faintly.

"Only one!" Why didn't you jes' go and make a end to yourself at once and done with it? I've got to rub all the strength out of my old bones now to put you where you was afore."

"Don't rub quite so hard, Phœbe," remonstrated the sick woman.

"No, I 'spose not!" was the indignant reply. "Jes' let you egzactly what you've a mind to every way—sick folks never *do* know what's good for 'em. Won't the doctor kick up a pretty row if he hears of this? Shouldn't wonder if he turned you all out of the house!"

Mrs. Mintley knew better than that; but Phœbe was bribed to a promise of secrecy, and Dr. Mulbrio remained unenlightened on the subject of that evening's entertainment.

"Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," quoted the innocent doctor, next morning, at the breakfast-table.

So very *apropos* a remark caused Mrs. Lellworth, Miss Helen Traston, and Mr. Rogers, to feel a strong disposition to laugh; while the others looked frightened.

"I repeat it," said the doctor, as though he had just heard of it for the first time, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise; and here, in our peaceful retreat, we have little idea of the troubles and dissensions that agitate the outer world, we have nothing to disturb us. Mr. Mintley, did you not inform me that Mrs. Mintley had not passed a good night?"

Mrs. Lellworth frowned warningly on the agitated man, who stammered something about being "restless;" and the doctor asked quite sternly,

"Did Mrs. Mintley have anything *hot* during the evening?"

Mr. Mintley was confounded—could he possibly have heard of that dreadful oyster?

"I should say 'scalding,'" pursued the doctor;

"and I feel it my duty to warn you that, if this imbibing of boiling liquids is continued, I cannot be made responsible for Mrs. Mintley's delicate state of health. Why, Mrs. Mintley, sir, has reveled in the very cream of this establishment—wet packs, hot foot-baths, rubbings down, and cold water shocks, have been fairly lavished upon her; and it really does seem to me," added the doctor, "that a proper appreciation of these attentions would lead a person to—to do differently."

Mr. Mintley tried to explain that Mrs. Mintley belonged to a superior order from the common race of beings, and that, therefore, her convalescence could scarcely be looked for in the ordinary course of things; while he mentally vowed never again to be the instrument of leading her into error.

It was one morning, about this time, that Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Trafton were lingering over a *tete-a-tete* breakfast in one of the most comfortable mansions in the bustling, wide-awake city of Chicago.

Mr. Trafton had seen many ups and downs in his commercial career, and had come to look upon money, and the respectability that money gives, as very important essentials to happiness. He was a wiry-looking man, of rather gentlemanly appearance, but prematurely old for his years; and he glanced with much complacency at the plump figure and rosy face of Mrs. Trafton, who was supernaturally young for her years, and who looked as though planning and scheming were quite out of her range. The fair, untroubled brow, and liquid eyes, seemed to proclaim a heart at peace with itself and with all the world—but, like Joe Baystock, Mrs. Trafton was "sly." She "never tried bluster where insinuation would do," but she managed invariably to have her own way.

It had been *her* way that Helen's young affections were thwarted, and her lover forbidden the house; and *her* way that the young girl was afterward sent to her aunts. And yet Helen and her step-mother were excellent friends.

There was no good reason why Lennox Clemdale, who had just written "M. D." to his name, should have been angrily reproached for daring to lift his eyes to Helen Trafton, except that Mrs. Trafton had a private pique against him for some fancied slight, and Mr. Trafton could not reconcile himself to the idea of his daughter marrying a poor, young physician.

So they had taken the affair in hand between them, and nearly made shipwreck of Helen's happiness; then, when her pale looks became a reproach, she was sent East to recover the

elasticity they had ruthlessly banished. To do Mr. Trafton justice, he did not believe in broken hearts, and could not, therefore, realize the mischief he was doing; but Mrs. Trafton, being a woman, could not be so easily excused.

"I have just been thinking," observed Mr. Trafton, "of Helen's last letter; and rather wondering that things should, on the whole, have happened so well. Circumstances may be said to have fairly played into our hands—I only wish the ins and outs of business would fit together as nicely. Hero is this love-sick girl plunged into such an entire change of scene and life, that the nonsense must naturally be shaken out of her. I hope, too, that this Water-Cure business will really do her good physically—I know they are excellent things sometimes."

"Not at all favorable to romance or sentiment, I should imagine," replied his wife.

Mr. Trafton looked contemptuous at the bare mention of "romance or sentiment;" and the lady continued,

"Helen has always seemed very near to me, and is much too lovely a girl to be allowed to throw herself away on a poor, young doctor. She is silly in some respects, as all young girls are, and fancies herself ill-used, I have no doubt, and Dr. Clemdale a hero of the first order. She will live to laugh at all this; and meanwhile, we must do all we can to see that she gets over it as soon as possible. She will be coming home, you know, after awhile, and it is desirable that she should find as little as may be to remind her of the past. The drawing-room furniture, now——"

"I thought so!" growled Mr. Trafton. "No matter what point you start from, you are sure to bring up on the everlasting topic of spending money."

"The drawing-room furniture," continued Mrs. Trafton, as blandly as though no interruption had occurred, "had better be re-covered, and new carpets procured—I can take the present ones for the bedrooms."

"And take the bedroom carpets for the kitchen, I suppose," suggested her husband, "just to save them?"

"It is really wonderful," said Mrs. Trafton, plaintively, as though overpowered by feelings in which she had never indulged, "how much of association lingers in the folds of a curtain, or the color of a sofa. A change in one's surroundings of this kind is far more effective in getting rid of a troublesome feeling than many would imagine."

"I am glad that Clemdale has made a change

in his 'surroundings,'" said Mr. Trafton, with a fresh growl. "He seems to have gone on an indefinite tour no one knows where—I should like to procure him a sentence of perpetual banishment."

"It is a great comfort," remarked his wife, "to think that he and Helen will be entirely apart, for a time, at least—and time, you know, works wonders."

"Sybilla writes of a Mr. Rogers," continued the anxious father, "whom she describes as a very entertaining young man, and very polite to them. I hope that Helen will not be falling in love again with some undesirable person."

"It is a highly improbable thing," said Mrs. Trafton, loftily, "that a charming girl like Helen should find anything attractive in a man at a Water-Cure establishment; and besides, it would be a very good thing, at present, if she should take a fancy to some one else. We could easily bring her to reason again, if necessary."

Mr. Trafton withdrew from contest with such a master-mind; and in the evening, Mrs. Trafton met him smilingly with the announcement,

"We are going to be in green, my dear—I have settled it all with Limple."

The first part of the sentence was rather inexplicable, suggesting visions of Robin Hood and his "Merry Men," that used to delight his boyhood; but the mention of Limple, an upholsterer, who knew his business, and had not, in consequence, an atom of conscience respecting his bills, was always a shock to the nerves of much-tried heads of families.

"This is the strangest business I ever heard of," remonstrated Mr. Trafton, with the vehemence of a man who feels that it is not of the slightest use. "Because my daughter chooses to fancy a man of whom I disapprove, I must be humbugged into refurbishing the drawing-room! I suppose that, if I were struck down suddenly with apoplexy, you would think it necessary to do the same thing?"

"Now," said Mrs. Trafton, soothingly, "you know, dear, that you are talking nonsense. How can you mention such horrible things to me? Besides, you will really enjoy the change in the furniture, for you always said that the red hurt your eyes. Just leave matters to me, and don't worry where it is not at all necessary—this sensible practice would add at least ten years to your life."

"And reduce us all to beggary! Well, go your way," relenting a little. "If you manage to bring Helen to her senses, you can refurbish the drawing-room every month, if you like."

Mrs. Trafton mentally resolved that she would "bring Helen to her senses," if getting new furniture would accomplish it; and she experienced a sudden rush of gratitude toward Miss Sybilla for conveying Helen to the Western Water-Cure.

And this is the way that things came about, and circumstances played so nicely into the hands of the conspirators.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

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A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 110.

"I CANNOT imagine, sir, what is the matter with you," said Dr. Mulbrie one day, to his strongest patient. "It does not seem to me that there is any organic disease, as you appear to think; but if you choose to fancy this, and remain for Water-Cure treatment, I do not object in the least to your doing so."

"I will let you into a secret, doctor," replied Mr. Rogers, confidentially. "I am a member of the faculty, and have come here for the express purpose of making certain investigations, knowing that there is a prejudice, owing, probably, to medical jealousy, against establishments of your admirable class. I intend to see for myself; and be assured, sir, that I will do you justice. Meanwhile, I depend on you not to betray me."

Dr. Mulbrie grasped his hand in an excess of gratitude. "Sir!" he exclaimed, rapturously, "I honor you! I have been the victim of more prejudice and misrepresentation than I can well explain. People have actually gone from this establishment, and said that they were starved."

"You don't tell me so!" murmured Mr. Rogers.

"I am a reformer," continued the doctor, excitedly; "a martyr, perhaps, for the cause of humanity. It is human nature, sir, to gormandize, to cram itself with all sorts of unwholesome food, that naturally engenders a train of diseases; and because I keep people from digging their graves with their teeth, they turn upon me with the ferocity of—of—"

"Tigers!" suggested Mr. Rogers, seeing that the "reformer" paused for a suitable companion.

"Then," continued the wrathful doctor, "they pamper themselves with luxurious beds, which accounts of itself for the wretched effeminacy of the human race; and call the sensible couches that I provide fit only for paupers. I have a way of hearing things," he continued—

"They!—holes are convenient"—thought his audience.

"A sort of second sense, that keeps me pretty well advised of the sentiments of this establishment—and I know that such sentiments are held. The human race, sir, are idiots, bedlamites, and must be dealt with accordingly."

"To what planet, then, do you belong?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Of course," replied the doctor, "there are redeeming exceptions—one of which is before me; but I repeat it that, as a general thing, people are great fools."

"I remember a story," said his companion, innocently, "which, of course, only confirms what you say. It was of an Irishman, I think, who said that it was always his fate to be on a jury with eleven of the most obstinate men he ever saw, for he never could bring them over to his way of thinking—showing conclusively that he, at least, was a fool."

The doctor was not quite sure whether this story was for or against him, and he looked at his companion sharply to ascertain the fact; but Mr. Rogers' face was quite impervious to such examination.

"One of the few sensible people in this establishment," continued the proprietor, "is that young girl, Helen Trafton."

Mr. Rogers winced involuntarily at this familiarity, and replied very stiffly that "*Miss* Trafton was a young lady of uncommon discernment."

"Just the woman," said the doctor, warmly, "to enter heart and soul with a man into a noble work of reformation; and I don't mind telling you, sir, that I have had very serious thoughts of associating her with me in this establishment as my wife. I think a step of this kind, on my part, would have a beneficial effect on this great undertaking."

Mr. Rogers restrained a strong disposition to knock down the dogmatic fool before him, as he asked, in suppressed rage, "Has Miss Trafton given you any encouragement to entertain such an idea?"

"I can't say that she has," replied the enthusiastic lover, "as I haven't asked for any yet. I am not one to go dilly-dallying round a woman for a year and a day, and living on smiles and such nonsense; but when I get ready to put the question, I shall put it, and undoubtedly receive a prompt, 'Yes.' Do you suppose that any conscientious woman could refuse such a mission as this?"

The doctor confounded himself so inextricably

with his establishment that it was impossible to answer him rationally; and his companion suddenly turned on his heel and left him to his own reflections—if he ever had such things.

A blue muslin dress was fluttering among the trees at the back of the grounds, and thither Mr. Rogers directed his steps.

The Grecian features were bent over the pages of an absorbing book, and the wind played with the golden tresses; but Helen apparently neither saw nor heard.

"Do you feel in the humor for an offer of marriage?" asked the gentleman, suddenly.

Helen looked up with a quick, angry blush, and the one exclamation, "Lennox!" but he continued hastily, "I came to warn you that Dr. Mulbrio entertains the project of inviting you to preside over his establishment—I had it just now from his own lips."

"Has that wretch taken leave of his senses?" asked Helen, indignantly; "or does he mean deliberately to insult me?"

"As to the first," replied her companion, "I do not think he is burdened with any to take leave of; and far from meditating an insult, he evidently considers it a very high compliment. As for myself, Helen," he continued, sadly, "the only hope I have is, that I may, one day manage, perhaps, to save your life, and then your father will relent; or some one will leave me a fortune, which would amount to the same thing."

"I should really like to have the opportunity of telling that miserable doctor what I think of him!" said Helen, trembling with indignation.

As if, in answer to, this desire, the "miserable doctor" suddenly appeared, and observed, with the utmost composure, "I should like a few moments' conversation with you, Miss Traston."

"You are at perfect liberty to speak," returned that young lady, with the air of a queen; "there can be no secrets between us."

The doctor hesitated rather awkwardly; and Mr. Rogers considerately withdrew, divided between rage and amusement, as he wondered if the doctor considered that the time had now come for him to "put it." He then tried to philosophize, by reflecting that it was the fate of pretty young ladies to be made love to; but, in spite of his attempts, he could not keep himself from a feeling of angry discomfort.

Meanwhile, the doctor's wooing prospered no better than his rival could have desired. Helen waited in haughty silence for his remarks; and, for the first time in his life, he felt disconcerted.

"What do you think," said he, at length, "of the establishment?"

Helen's face seemed to express the question, "Did you come out here to ask me that?" But she merely replied, with freezing coldness, "In what respect?"

"Oh, well!" said the doctor, beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable, "in every respect—I mean like a person who felt a sort of interest in it, you know."

"As I do not feel the slightest interest in it," replied the impracticable damsel, "such a question cannot possibly concern me."

An awful pause, during which Helen coolly resumed her book, and seemed to have forgotten the existence of her puzzled lover.

When, on the verge of despair, the doctor was visited by a bright idea—he had not been sufficiently explicit; and gathering fresh courage, he propounded the inquiry,

"What would you think, now, of presiding over such an institution? In concert, I mean, with some ones of experience?"

"I should not think of it at all," said Helen, without lifting an eyelash.

"Look here!" exclaimed the doctor, losing all patience, "I want to let you know that I am asking you to be my wife. I really think very highly of you; and I am sure that we two together could make the establishment the very model of a Water-Cure, and hand our names down to posterity emblazoned in letters of gold."

"Now listen to me," replied Helen, calmly, and looking very white and quiet; "this thing must be stopped at once and forever. Let me hear such words from your lips again, and my aunt and I will immediately leave the place. It suits our convenience to remain at present, and my aunt imagines herself benefited; but another word from you of the nature of those just uttered, will cause our immediate departure."

As Helen swept indignantly into the house, the rejected lover gazed after her in a perfectly bewildered frame of mind, and gave utterance to the valuable sentiment, "The ways of women are past finding out!"

"What is the matter with you, child?" asked Mrs. Lellworth, in her merry way, as she suddenly encountered Helen. "You look as though you had just had an offer."

Rushing unceremoniously past her, Helen gained her own apartment, and gave herself up to the luxury of a good cry. Aunt Sybilla was in the pack, and would be safe for the next hour; and she improved the time to such

advantage, that, when her astonished relative returned from her aquatic expedition, she found her pretty niece with such ruby-colored eyes and nose, that, whatever poets may say to the contrary, she had made a perfect fright of herself.

"What is the matter?" asked her aunt, excitedly. "Have you a pain in your heart? You know that you would never let Dr. Mulbrie——"

"Aunt Sybilla!" exclaimed Helen, petulantly, "I want to go home with you. Do let us leave this horrid place at once!"

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Miss Sybilla, reproachfully; "but the baths are doing me a great deal of good."

"I will stay, then," replied Helen, "if you will promise not to let that horrid doctor come near me again—he had the impudence to ask me to marry him."

The ridiculousness of the thing overcame her, and she became hysterical, to Miss Sybilla's great distress, who scarcely knew what to do with her; and kept patting her on the back until old Phœbe happened to come in, and took her regularly and skillfully in hand.

"Ole fool!" muttered Phœbe, apostrophizing her master. "Any one kin see with half an eye what he's been up to; I've knowed it was in him for evor so long—only wish she'd boxed his ears!"

When the aunt and niece next appeared in the dining-room, Dr. Mulbrie found himself treated with such pointed contempt, that he heartily regretted his presumption.

Mr. Rogers was enjoying it all very much; but he continued to be the life of the company, notwithstanding.

"It is a very sad thing," he observed, "to be a continual deception. I suppose, now, that no one hero would take me for an invalid?"

A universal, "No," assailed him; and Mrs. Mintley, who had made a holiday for her husband by coming down to take her boiling tea at the table, assured him that he looked far less like an invalid than the doctor himself.

The person referred to did not appear to relish the compliment; and Mr. Rogers thought the comparison was by no means a strong one.

"I have had a great many narrow escapes," continued the speaker, with the laudable intention of infusing a little life into their dismal repasts. "When a small boy, I fractured my skull; and after that I swallowed an iron screw, that remained in my left lung for five years. Every one thought I was going into a consumption."

"Did you go?" asked Mrs. Lellworth, with a comical twinkle in her eyes.

"No," he replied, composedly, "I thought better of it; but I never could look as an invalid ought, and so got little credit for my sufferings. It is just the same hero; but I hope soon not to require any sympathy, as the Water-Cure system is doing wonders for me. Why, before I came, I could not be induced to eat stale bread and mush, and now I am thankful even to get them; people who are starving, you know, will eat anything. It is a great comfort to me that the doctor and I understand one another."

The doctor looked as though he was not at all sure that he *did* understand him, and began rather to wish that Mr. Rogers would express some intention of leaving.

"I believe that you are more of a humbug than an invalid," whispered Mrs. Lellworth, "and time will show if I am not right."

"Do you recollect the story," said Mr. Rogers, in the same tone, "in which the boy calls to his father, 'Father! father! they've found me out?'"

"I really don't know what to make of you," continued the lady; "I am afraid you are not canny. Do tell me, if you can, what is the trouble between Miss Helen Trafton and the doctor—I am quite curious on the subject."

Such an unmistakable flush of anger appeared in her neighbor's eyes, that her curiosity on the subject was allowed to rest.

"For pity's sake, Mr. Rogers!" she exclaimed, in the course of the evening, "do tell us what to do with ourselves! We are just as stupid here as dormice. Can't you get up some sort of excitement for us? I almost wish we could become intoxicated by way of variety."

"Did you ever take any hasheesh?" asked the gentleman addressed.

"Hasheech? No! What in the world is that? Something to eat, or drink, or inhale? And what are the effects of it? And do you have a good time? And is it dangerous? And where do you get it? And how much do you take? And what put it into your head? And will the doctor find it out? And did you ever take any yourself? And I want to know all about it."

"So I should imagine," said her companion, dryly; "but I should be afraid of *your* taking it. Nothing short of tearing the roof off would satisfy you, while under its influence."

"Oh! yes, it would," she replied. "If I could shake the doctor within an inch of his life, I think I should be quite happy."

"I cannot imagine why you are so spiteful against the doctor," said her companion. "Is

be not what you ladies call an agreeable man?"

"Now, Mr. Rogers!" exclaimed the lady, turning on him with unfeigned indignation, "that is so exactly like a man! I think you are all born lawyers, for you never admit anything is, you can possibly help it—that is, not in words. But I have seen a flash in your eye that has shown me pretty plainly which way the wind lies; so, you may as well take off your veil of hypocrisy, and let us talk honestly face to face."

"I thought you wanted to talk about hasheesh," was the provoking reply. "I do not care to talk about the doctor."

"Very well," said Mrs. Lellworth, "we will talk about hasheesh, then; and, perhaps, if I take it, I will manage to punish you for this. Now, what is your plan respecting hasheesh?"

"I have no plan," said he; "but I have some hasheesh, which is of the nature of opium, and said to produce pleasant feelings, and make people do queer things. As you expressed yourself to be dying for something to do, this might be a good opportunity to frighten the doctor, and create an excitement."

Mrs. Lellworth clapped her plump hands in delight.

"I hope they'll all take it!" she exclaimed; "Mrs. Mintley and all, and be just as bad as ever they can. I intend to do my worst."

"I have no fears for you on that score," laughed her companion. "I only hope that you won't be so bad as to put an end to the establishment altogether. I should really like to test the doctor a little," he continued, "and see whether he has sense enough to find out that his patients have been tampered with."

The hasheesh was passed around, and rapidly disposed of, amid many questions and much laughter; and even Mrs. Mintley took her full share, though under protest from Mr. Mintley, who mildly remonstrated.

"My dear love, pray remember the oyster!"

But the "dear love" persisted that the oyster had nothing whatever to do with hasheesh; and not only partook of the fascinating drug herself, but, like her great ancestors, succeeded in deluding her Adam into eating likewise.

It seemed a very crazy performance on the part of all those sane men and women; but the monotony of their life was unbearable, and the experiment promised to be so exciting that it was not to be resisted.

Miss Sybilla, who was suffering from tooth-ache, was drawn into the conspiracy by a promise of speedy release from all pains and

aches; and Helen took it because the prospect of "going out of herself" for awhile was the only one that promised any sort of comfort.

In the course of the evening, Dr. Mulbrio received a peremptory summons to Mrs. Mintley.

When he entered the apartment, he found that lady seated in a large chair, with her cap on one side, and a pair of bellows in her hand. Mr. Mintley stood in a corner, looking foolish.

"Sit down," said Mrs. Mintley, severely. "I wish to inform you that you are an elaborate parrot, with a wooden leg, and I intend to blow you up."

The doctor trembled; this extraordinary, but unfortunately profitable patient always kept him in a state of suspense as to what phase her disease would take next; but this address manifested a decided aberration of intellect that was really alarming. Mr. Mintley, he thought, was, probably, frightened to death; but when that gentleman, with a rakish air, began to sing something about "Blow, gentle zephyr," as an accompaniment to his wife's performance with the bellows, the case was still more perplexing.

"Why, you've both been drinking!" exclaimed the doctor, after steadfastly regarding the pair. "You are perfectly aware, Mr. Mintley, that I allow no spirituous liquors in my establishment—what does this mean, sir?"

"I know you don't allow anything to drink in your establishment," said Mr. Mintley, with a very silly smile, "nor anything to eat, either; but Arethusa——"

"Silence!" shouted Mrs. Mintley, making a sudden lunge at the doctor with her bellows. "You are a horrid old tom-cat! you know you are! And if you say a word to Adam, I'll tear your eyes out! You've been killing me ever since I came here, and, now I'm dead and buried, I'm going to haunt you as long as I live. Let me cut off your hair, and put some of it into the beds—they're dreadfully hard, all the people say so."

By this time, Mr. Mintley had seized the doctor in an affectionate embrace, and was whirling him around the room, and singing wildly, "We won't go home till morning!"

"Go home this instant!" screamed Mrs. Mintley, punching him through the half-open door with her bellows. "How dare you stay in my room so late, keeping Adam up, and making such a commotion? I know you're intoxicated, and you may be thankful that we don't turn you out of the house!"

The next room was Mrs. Lellworth's; and the astonished doctor knocked at the door to make inquiries respecting the scene he had just

witnessed. An audible sound of weeping saluted his ears, and an angry voice said, "Come in."

He entered to find Miss Tweedy in tears on the sofa, and Mrs. Lellworth apparently in the sulks.

"What is the matter?" asked the doctor, of the weeping fair one.

"I want my money," she replied, with a loud sob. "You told me I should have it to-day."

"You are a fool!" said the doctor, vehemently. "I have had nothing to do with any money."

"That is the way he always talks, Carrie," said Miss Tweedy, appealingly, and crying harder than ever. "He said he'd keep it for me; but now I want him to give it back to me."

"Madam," said the doctor, turning fiercely to Mrs. Lellworth, "what does this woman mean? Do you know what is the matter with her?"

But Mrs. Lellworth remained speechless; and the doctor began to wonder if he were awake or dreaming. Such conduct had never been witnessed in the establishment before.

"When are you going to marry me?" asked Miss Tweedy, with a sudden change of subject.

"Never!" replied the person addressed, with most eloquent emphasis.

"You hear that, Carrie?" continued the tearful lady, again apostrophizing her silent friend. "And how in the world am I to get my money?"

"I believe you are all drunk to-night!" exclaimed the harassed doctor. "And if I can only ferret out this mystery, I will certainly expose the conspirator, or conspirators."

Mrs. Lellworth rose deliberately, and walking up to the excited speaker, administered as severe a castigation as the nature of the implement (a parasol) would admit of; and saying, in a withering tone, "Leave the room, sir, until you are fit to show yourself in the presence of ladies!" calmly shut the door on him.

After this assault and battery, the doctor was almost beside himself with anger and perplexity, and scarcely knew where to turn his steps.

Just then the knocking woman besought him to go to Miss Trafston. "The old maid," she whispered, "she's in such a way!"

Trembling inwardly, the doctor approached Miss Sybilla's bedside.

"Five small imps, and two curly-tailed demons," said that lady, as though she were counting them on the patchwork bed-quilt. "It is very singular that I never got into such society before I came to this place; I am not at all pleased, Dr. Mulbrie, with the style of

company you keep here. My niece, too, has been murdered!" she proceeded, calmly, as though this were a slight inconvenience not worth dwelling upon; "and I shall be obliged to you if you will send in your bill, and tell the first train to be at the door at midnight."

The doctor turned hastily toward Helen; but she was lying in a deep sleep, perfectly quiet, and looking like a piece of beautifully-sculptured marble.

"Slow poison!" whispered Miss Sybilla. "I think we shall bring an action for this. But will you send those imps away or not? How very rude of them to stay under the circumstances!"

"My good lady," remonstrated the doctor, while the perspiration started to his brow at the dreadful condition of his patients, the cause of which he was unable to fathom, "my good lady, you are certainly laboring under a mistake."

"Don't take the other two out of your pocket," was the rather irrelevant reply; "I must positively object to having any more let loose in the room. I wonder you do not keep them properly chained. I really believe you are the Evil One himself!" she continued, excitedly. "Go out of the room immediately, before it is full of brimstone!"

This was the third expulsion in the course of the evening; and full of a determination to punish somebody, the doctor inquired furiously for Mr. Rogers. That gentleman was supposed to be in his apartment, and thither the enraged M. D. directed his steps.

Mr. Rogers was extended upon his couch, with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, and his tongue very hard at work. Indeed, he had nearly exhausted the British poets, and was now in the full tide of Poe's "Raven." As the doctor entered, he greeted him with the complimentary address,

"Are you bird, or are you devil——"

"This thing must be stopped, sir!" interrupted the doctor, looking very fierce, and trembling all over.

"Or thing of evil?" proceeded the speaker; and when he had gotten through with the "Raven," he took up "Thanatopsis;" and could not be prevailed upon to speak at all except in the words of another.

It allayed the doctor's suspicions to find the new-comer apparently in the same condition as the others; but it by no means satisfied his curiosity. He did not relish the idea of having the Western Water-Cure converted into a lunatic-asylum; and he was obliged to admit to

himself that, in this case, "the eye of science" was entirely at a loss.

As he was leaving Mr. Rogers' room, that gentleman called pitifully after him:

"Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh! give me back my heart!"

One gentleman flung a pair of boots at the doctor, and another called him an old humbug; while Phœbe seemed to be peeping behind all the doors, and enjoying the fun intensely. Not being able to seize any one else, the doctor seized her, and interrogated her severely.

"Now," said he, sternly, "have you any idea what is the matter with all these people? What have they been eating and drinking?"

But Phœbe, knowing the value of her services, laughed his authority to scorn.

"Eatin' and drinkin'?" she repeated, with a chuckle. "I guess it's the want of it's made 'em crazy; or mebbe," she continued, trying the sarcastic vein, "mebbe that hot supper to-night, with the fried chicken, and oysters, and strong coffee, was too much for 'em. Shouldn't wonder, now, if that *was* it."

"You're a great fool, Phœbe," said the doctor, turning off worsted.

"Mebbo I am, and mebbe I ain't," said the colored woman to herself; "but ef I am a fool, there's a pair of us."

Every one came down to breakfast next morning, and every one looked as though nothing had happened—except the doctor; and on the first opportunity, he addressed the company with the unexpected remark,

"I shall now insist upon having last night's performances thoroughly explained."

"I am very glad," said Mr. Rogers, calmly, "that such is your intention, for I had a very singular night of it. I began to be afraid there were housebreakers about; for the conviction that there was a rogue of *some* kind in my room last night was so strong upon me that I could not possibly shake it off. I dreamed, too, that I put him to flight by quoting poetry to him—a novel weapon, was it not?"

The doctor's face was a deep mahogany color, and Mr. Rogers continued, "I had come to the conclusion that this might be nightmare, or something of the kind, until you, too, spoke of a singular experience last night, and I thought we could not both be mistaken. Did any one go to your room, doctor? And are the spoons safe?"

"No," replied the doctor, after a vain endeavor to confuse the calm eye that gazed so steadfastly into his, "no one visited my room; but I visited several rooms, and met with a very strange reception."

"I had the most vivid dream about the Evil One," observed Miss Sybilla. "It affected me so unpleasantly that I could scarcely believe it wasn't real; and I thought, too, that Helen was murdered!"

"And I," said Miss Tweedy, with a contemptuous glance at the doctor, "had the most ridiculous dream, in which I was troubled because I couldn't do a thing that nothing would induce me to do in my waking moments. An odious man like that, too!"

Here her expression became so vindictive, that the doctor absolutely trembled.

"Well," said Mrs. Lellworth, indifferently, "I have a distinct recollection of being in a great rage, and pommeling somebody well—but who I can't, for the life of me, say."

"And I," said Helen, dreamily, "thought that I was in heaven, and never wanted to come back to earth."

"The doctor has not yet told us *his* dream," observed Mr. Rogers, with much suavity.

"I dreamed that you were all crazy," was the sudden reply; "and I am by no means satisfied that it *was* a dream."

The doctor disappeared as he said this; and Mr. Rogers looked very much like laughing.

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Mrs. Lellworth, incredulously, "that all this was hasheesh?"

"Every bit of it," was the reply; "but I really had no idea that you would all conduct yourselves in so extraordinary a manner."

"What did I do?" asked Miss Sybilla, in great trepidation. "I believe it cured my tooth-ache; but, dear me! I hope my conduct was not unlady-like. I wonder what I said to the doctor?"

"Nothing worse, I believe, than calling him the Evil One," said Mr. Rogers. "He seemed to receive a general blowing up all around."

"Mrs. Mintley began it with a pair of bellows," said Mr. Mintley, evidently very proud of his wife's performance.

"Bravo for Mrs. Mintley!" exclaimed the chief conspirator; and all were so interested in hearing how Mrs. Mintley conducted herself on this important occasion, that the devoted husband was the center of attraction.

There was a great deal of laughter among the invalids, especially after Phœbe had been questioned, and added her testimony to the light already thrown upon the subject; and all agreed that the doctor must be thoroughly puzzled respecting the cause of such singular conduct.

The hasheesh experiment had succeeded even

better than he expected, and Mr. Rogers was wicked enough to enjoy most thoroughly this odd sort of revenge upon Helen's presumptuous lover. It was a very dog-in-the-manger-ish feeling, though, after all; for he progressed not one step in the matter himself, and quite longed for the house to burn down, or something to occur by which he might save Helen's life, and thus win the right to watch over it forever after.

Dr. Mulbrie came to the conclusion that, as it would not be exactly wise to turn all his offending patients out of the house, he could do no better than to ignore entirely the subject of their inexplicable conduct of the night before; and he did this so well, that it was quite hopeless to hazard a guess as to what he thought.

Helen had improved wonderfully during her sojourn at the Western Water-Cure; and the roses that Dr. Tormesbury charged her to gather had really made their appearance. Miss Sybilla was quite proud of the success of her experiment; and she often found herself wondering what "brother Isaac" would say to Mr. Rogers as a son-in-law. Such a very agreeable and desirable young man—only that he seemed rather silent on the subject of his antecedents; and she had never yet found out exactly where he came from.

She couldn't get Helen to speak of him at all; but then Helen was different, in most things, from other girls, and, as far as her observation went, she believed that she was by no means indifferent to him. But Miss Sybilla had a great deal of delicacy, and scorned the office of match-maker; she, therefore, let things take their course, especially as they did not seem to be taking a very decided one.

Mr. Rogers was not happy; and he had begun to ask himself if his expedition to the Western Water-Cure had been at all productive of the success that the sacrifice deserved. He had been near Helen, to be sure, and had seen her daily and almost hourly—but what advantage was there in that when he seemed to be farther off than ever? He could not say but that he respected her more than if she had acted in direct opposition to her father's wishes, and disobedience to his commands—but it was certainly very unsatisfactory.

He tried hard to invent some exploit by which matters could be materially altered for the better; but invention seemed to fail him entirely, and he was obliged to wait quietly, with a Micawber-like faith, that something would turn up.

As October approached, and Miss Clarissa

Trafford got deeper and deeper into the mysteries of pickling and preserving, she became more anxious for "sister Sybilla's return—especially as she did not feel quite easy about "sister Pamela."

She was unwilling to admit this, even to herself; but one or two remarks dropped by Mrs. Rolles had set her thinking, and particularly that question as to whether Dr. Tormesbury was not *very* attentive. He certainly was "very attentive"—more so, she believed, than was at all necessary; and it seemed to her that he became more and more so. Suppose that, on sister Sybilla's return, she should find things not quite as she would like them, would not the blame naturally attach itself to her?

And yet the poor soul could not imagine what to do. That something should be done she felt pretty sure—but what it was she could not tell. She had a dreadful, indefinite sort of feeling that something was going to happen—something that would not be at all agreeable; and Catharine had declared, from certain infallible signs, that a wedding was to be looked for, either in that house, or of some one belonging to it.

Miss Clarissa did not feel comfortable; and after a few minutes, at night, spent in thinking the matter over—for she was one of those inveterate sleepers who, unless they fall asleep in the act of undressing, consider that they have had rather a poor night's rest—she resolved to "speak" to sister Pamela—in other words, to ask her what her intentions were.

This conclusion was not arrived at without much trepidation. It seemed a formidable thing to make an attack upon sister Pamela, of whom she stood greatly in awe; but arming herself with two of the finest of her peaches for preserving, she entered upon her mission.

Miss Pamela was lying gracefully on the lounge, in her everlasting white dress, with a red orange shawl picturesquely disposed about her. The doctor was expected every moment.

"How do you feel to-day?" said Miss Clarissa, awkwardly enough, and just in the tone of a person who evidently wished to be saying something else.

"About the same, thank you," replied Miss Pamela, a little surprised at her sister's manner; "I never vary much, you know. If I could have some *well* days, I suppose I should receive more sympathy for my sick ones."

"Pamela," said her sister, suddenly grasping the dreaded subject by the horns, "do you really think that Dr. Tormesbury does you ^{any} good?"

"Clarissa," was the somewhat unexpected reply, "you are certainly an excellent house-keeper—and as to pickles and preserves, few can equal you; but excuse me for saying that, when you enter upon questions of this nature, you get entirely out of your sphere. Now, Dr. Tormesbury—"

"Hold on there!" exclaimed a cheerful voice. "No slander, if you please—Dr. Tormesbury is here to speak for himself. Which of you ladies has been endeavoring to blacken my character?"

Poor Miss Clarissa certainly looked guilty enough; and murmuring something about preserves boiling over, made a hasty retreat, with an inward resolution not to attempt "speaking" to sister Pamela again.

Not long after, Miss Pamela made her appearance quite unexpectedly in the kitchen. Her sister was almost frightened, as she looked hastily around from her preserve-jars.

"Clarissa," said the invalid, suddenly, "I am going out for a drive; and—and I want you to kiss me."

Now it was not an unusual thing for Miss Pamela to go out for a drive, as Dr. Tormesbury laid great stress upon her "taking the air," and he seemed to think that she could take it to the best advantage in his buggy; but it was an unusual thing for her to condescend to go into the kitchen and request to be kissed.

"Oh, Pamela!" murmured her sister, as she gave the desired embrace, "what are you going to do?"

"I am going to take a drive," replied Miss Pamela, composedly, which was the truth, but not the whole truth, as the result proved.

Dr. Tormesbury had said very eloquently that it was best to do things quietly and not make a fuss; that people were very apt to reconcile themselves to what could not be helped, when, had they been consulted beforehand, they would have opposed it with all their might; that maiden sisters, as a general thing, objected to people's getting married, but were rather glad of it, on the whole, when once it was well over, with much more to the same purpose, which had the effect on Miss Pamela Trafston, a sober lady of forty odd, of inducing her to take the extraordinary step of being clandestinely united to a man whom no one could reasonably have objected to her marrying in an ordinary way. But Miss Pamela had glided out of her teens and her twenties without encountering any romance; and if it did come rather late in life, this was certainly better than not coming at all.

Poor Miss Clarissa made strange mistakes in the putting up of those memorable peaches,

for she felt more than ever the conviction that something unpleasant was going to happen; but when she found that she had actually emptied the vinegar-cruet into the syrup, she retired to the nearest chair and relieved her feelings with a good cry.

Crying, however, never yet remedied mistakes, and poor Miss Clarissa was continually reminding herself that she was not the kind of figure to indulge in sentiment. She had no doubt, too, that she was very foolish, and sister Pamela was certainly old enough to take care of herself; but just as she reached this conclusion, a small boy appeared with a note, and eyed her with much curiosity.

Miss Clarissa trembled uncomfortably as she received the daintily-folded epistle, so characteristic of Miss Pamela; but when, in answer to her question, the boy replied that "Dr. Tormesbury had sent him," her heart fairly sank with apprehension. A glance at the inside of the note confirmed her worst suspicions.

It was signed "Pamela Tormesbury," and the poor lady went regularly off into a good strong fit of hysterics.

"Oh, Pamela! how could you?" murmured the sufferer, when all the orthodox remedies had been expended upon her. "If you had only waited until Sybilla came! And to think of you marrying Dr. Tormesbury, too!"

This sounded as though Miss Pamela had unwisely selected the doctor from a crowd of more eligible admirers; a theory that Catharine, who was armed with hartshorn and other pungent remedies, was by no means disposed to adopt, for she whispered rather audibly to "Crissy" that "She didn't see, for her part, who else she could have married!"

Miss Clarissa roused herself at this, and assumed what dignity she could. She picked up the note again, and tried to understand its contents.

This was not an easy matter, however, for it had been a labored composition on the part of the writer, relating as it did to the one great event of her life, the one rainbow-tinged bit of romance, in which it had been her good fortune to figure. She had composed the note some time, and rewritten it again and again, until at length she deemed it worthy even of the crisis that it was intended to announce.

And Miss Pamela had written, with a smile on her lips, what gave her poor, weak sister such unmitigated sorrow in the perusal—for was not she, Pamela Trafston, about to emerge from the secluded valley of commonplace existence into the broad highway of incident and

adventure? Was she not to cast off the chrysalis of old maidism, and come out in the full-bloom butterfly character of Mrs. Dr. Tormesbury?

So, the note was worthy of Miss Pamela, and worthy of the occasion; and it ran thus:

"My dear sister, you will, of course, be surprised at the communication I have to make, and I scarcely expect you to realize it. There are some things, Clarissa, that cannot be talked about; and I certainly do not expect *you* to understand how two congenial natures can melt imperceptibly into one."

As this chemical process was quite beyond the range of Miss Clarissa's mind, she did not attempt to comprehend it; but turned to the next clause with a mournful sigh, as she "wondered what sister Sybilla would say," and felt very much like a culprit at the idea of meeting her.

"In Dr. Tormesbury," pursued Miss Pamela, "I have found all that I need; a strong, manly nature to lean upon, counsel, comfort, and chivalrous devotion; all, in short, that my prisoned soul has sighed for while beating its prison bars in weary disappointment."

Miss Clarissa read this over until the sentiment became more and more indistinct; and then she went on in despair,

"You know, Clarissa, how my sensitive nature shrinks from a harsh, disapproving word or look. I do not expect to lift others up to my own height, but I cannot bear to have my most sacred feelings misconstrued; to have dull, prosaic eyes endeavoring to decipher what must always remain to them an unknown language."

Miss Clarissa began to wonder if her "dull,

prosaic eyes" had not better give up the helpless task.

"It would kill me to talk of that which sensitive natures learn by intuition; to speak of finding in another a mirror of thoughts, and feelings, and sentiments, that I fondly thought had been locked in my own bosom. Those who cannot understand me will, doubtless, condemn the step I have taken; those who can, need no explanation of the causes that have led me to sign myself . . . PAMELA TORMESBURY."

To say that Miss Clarissa was left in a hopelessly-bewildered state by this epistle, which said so much and told nothing, would scarcely express her feelings; she was totally at a loss to account for the extraordinary step which she had divined from the signature above; and could only console herself with the reflection that, as she never *had* understood sister Pamela, it was not to be supposed she could do so now.

Then she fell to considering Pamela's prospects. Dr. Tormesbury had just finished building a very comfortable house, that had excited the admiration and surmises of the town generally; and it was a standing joke that he was making ready for a young wife. He had an extensive practice, was of unexceptionable character, and considered, in every respect, "well-to-do in the world." If he chose to marry Pamela, and Pamela chose to marry him, there was nothing to be said against it; but poor Miss Clarissa was utterly crushed by the inexpressible silliness of the elopement.

It was quite evident that she had not a particle of romance in her composition.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

A LONG JOURNEY: CHAPTER I. OUT TO SEA.

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A L O N G J O U R N E Y

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARGRET HOWTH, ETC., ETC."

CHAPTER I. OUT TO SEA.

THE coast here was flat—a mere uneven band of yellow sand-beach, stretched from one point in the horizon to another just opposite, cutting the world in two. Mary Corson could see from one end to the other of it. She had been pacing up and down all of the afternoon. On her left were the marshes, lush and brown in the late October weather; to the right, the sea, a vast, shining, steel-blue plane.

It was intolerably quiet and desolate; overhead, one or two dark, sullen bulges in the gray sky suggested clouds, but they were motionless. A fish-hawk circled through the air, piping a keen, fretful cry; the tide was coming in, but it was only at long intervals that the edge of the oily water lapped the shore with a furtive, uneasy whisper.

Miss Corson went up to her companion, who was lying on her back on a heap of dry kelp, her hands clasped under her head, looking, half-asleep, at a seining-boat that shone white on the far sea-line.

"I thought I knew the sea," she said. "But I never saw it in a cataleptic trance before."

The girl got up with a chagrined look. "You have been used to a rugged coast-line, I suppose. Our beach must be woefully dull and speechless to you. For me, I never saw the sea-rocks; or any hills, for that matter." She twisted up the yellow hair which had fallen down her neck, stuck the comb into it, and stood, looking out to sea, with a forced, uncomfortable smile. Mary glanced at her with her shrewd, half-shut eyes, amused to see how much poor Berenice had dreaded this visit of hers, and had depended on the sea to help her through with it.

The girl's delicate, weakly lined face, with its rose and milky tints, like an infant's, was as transparent, Miss Corson thought, as water. She knew the group of young women to whom Berenice Lamorce undoubtedly belonged. She had been taciturn enough so far; but those soft lips—held always a little apart—would begin presently, she was sure, to dribble out what few ideas there might be in her brain in an unending stream. She meant, however, to make the best of her hostess. It need not be for long,

she was thankful to remember. Her stay was limited to a fortnight.

"I could not find the sea dull or speechless," she said, good-humoredly. "Come, let us look for more of these freckled shells. Don't be afraid, Berenice, I shall get on excellently here. Old Ocean ~~had~~ have been kin and confidants these many years," with a wave of her hand, the least in the world dramatic.

She strolled on down the sands, not seeing the amused flash in the innocent blue eyes behind her.

She grew graver. In spite of herself the spell of the lonely, desolate coast was upon her. It was a new experience for her to lunch, as she had done this morning, in a white and gilt saloon in Philadelphia, with the interminable red bricks and marble slabs massed about her; and to stand now face to face with nature in her most solitary, melancholy mood. It seemed to her as if in coming there she had dropped behind her, one by one, whatever garments of grace and beauty the year wore. Yonder, in the crowded streets, it was sultry October, yellow tinted; the air, the sidewalk trees, the fluttering dresses of the women glowing with generous color and warmth. Then she came through long slopes of sullen fields, inhospitable, meager farms; drearier stretches afterward of stunted pines and oaks, with long gaps of blanched sand between; and here and there the lonesome fires of the charcoal-burners. Down at last into this vast basin of the lee-coast, which had been once the ocean-bed, from which the sea had crept back inch by inch, at the border of which it lay forever watching, sleepless, cruel, implacable.

When Miss Corson began to understand the spirit of the place she said, suddenly, "Why, the sea possesses one here like a demon! What has it done to you, Miss Lamorce?" looking at her again curiously. "What did it make of you?"

"How could I tell? Let us go on to the village," said Berenice. "Made of me?" she muttered to herself; for poor Berry was not a young woman of modern asthetic tendencies, and consequently did not keep her "inner life" as a private puppet-box, into which she could peer with critical eyes. The "sweet fool!" as

Shakspeare would have called her, went down the beach after that with hot and cold shivers creeping through her; stopping now and then to sift sand through her fingers; feeling her tall, graceful, loping body a weight, heavy, and askew. The sea, or something else, had made of her but a sleazy, mawkish piece of work, she thought, looking at the compact, finely-moulded figure before her in its close-fitting, black silk dress, at the resolutely poised head, the face, every feature of which betrayed a knowledge of whole worlds of life outside of Berry's vision, and a shrewd, racy zest in them.

The village, when they came to it, was but a huddled group of about a dozen low, wooden houses in a clearing of the forest, browned in the salt air, ragged, unthrifty patches of Indian corn growing about them; seines, ears, crab-nets, drying on the roofs and fences.

"Where are the people?" asked Miss Corson.

"Out in the seining-boats—excepting these," as they turned the corner of a garden lot, and came to the tavern—a log house, with a low stoop, where some fishermen, in red-flannel shirts and baggy trousers, were seated, their elbows on their knees, and mouths open, listening to one who balanced himself on the edge of the pump-trough, spitting tobacco-juice about in puddles, and holding forth in this wise:

"So I says. There's nothin' so singlar as the singlar things that happen to people. Me and Jim Noles, when we was down with truck aboard the Jane—me and Jim—"

Miss Corson looked at her companion with fresh interest after they had heard this, and passed; then began a catechism after the manner of one amusing a child.

"Berenice had been born here? Had known no companions but *these*?" nodding back to the tavern. To all of which questions Berry answered patiently enough until the last, when the glitter came to the blue eyes again.

"No *others*; besides Richard, when he was at home, and Mrs. Kirk." Her voice rose a little. "We have no church but the beach; and no lecturer but Jim on his bench yonder. I'm afraid, Miss Corson, you will find you have come to a hermitage, but one that has neither the savor of solitude nor religion in it."

Miss Corson made a jesting answer, the color rising to her cheeks. She was annoyed as if a bird had pecked at her, at the flash of defiance. They were on the sands again; the breakers were coming in now, furred with white foam, in silent, stealthy, cat-like leaps; but Mary was looking at the light, indolent figure between her and them.

"Her limbs shiver unsteadily if one looks at her," sneered the society-bred Mary Corson. The face puzzled her, however; the cutting and coloring of it was as delicate as a painting on porcelain.

"I wonder what Ralph would think of her? There is no foreseeing the conceited whims of an artist's eye; but for my part—"

Her eye, as she spoke, caught the crispy bits of white foam left by the retreating wave. She picked one up and crushed it in her hand—a little brackish water was left in her palm. "Such women are like—that—" she thought, with a certain acrid temper in her face.

She looked, however, as if she would have been miserably bored had she not known herself to be the most notoriously courteous woman in the world; and poor Berenice stood uneasily by quite conscious of it. In this strait, Miss Corson caught sight of a small skiff rocking on the surf at the mouth of the inlet. It was moored only by a rope knotted to a stake in the sand. She entered it, and then jumped in to bail it out, finding a rusty tin scoop in the bottom.

"You can row, of course, Miss Lamorce?" not listening to her answer; but wondering to herself, as she tucked up her sleeves and fastened her skirts, so as not to touch the wet floor, how anything so insipid as this girl came to be the child of old Peter Lamorce. She remembered the passionate, white-haired, little lawyer when she was a child, before he quitted the world to bury himself here; and how his jerking ways and fierce nervousness had shocked the Corsons out of all their propriety.

"Now, come on."

Berenice hesitated, with one foot on the gunwale.

"The tide is on the turn. I doubt if you can keep us near to shore," she said; "though your arms look as strong as Dick's," glancing admiringly at the swelling muscles under the satiny skin. "Besides, the boat is patched."

"I hold a good oar," impatiently, wetting her palms to take a firmer hold. Her face was heated and kindling already. "I have good muscles," she said, when the other was seated. "I'm Western-born and Yankee-bred, so there has a good deal of toughness and endurance gone into my making up."

Berry smiled feebly, and, taking her oar, pulled as best she could; and they floated out on the surface of the water, rippling blue and broken under their keel, clear purple farther away.

It was then that a curious thing happened to Mary Corson, the like of which she never

remembered before in her life. She had risen, thrust her oar into the mud of the inlet to shove the boat off shore, and then held it up while she sat down, and the skiff swung slowly out. Meanwhile, not rowing for a few minutes, she looked at Berenice. An unaccountable shudder passed over her. The girl was in the bow of the boat trying to manage her oars, her slight figure cut clear as a cameo between Mary and the stretch of clear air behind. Below her, beyond, out as far as eye could see, nothing but the dark, hungry sea, with its lapping breakers. A lance of level light struck out yonder on shore from the heap of wet, gray clouds, where the sun was going down—where it fell, the white caps of foam flashed out into a sudden brilliance. It rested broadly on the girl for a minute, on her dark plaid dress, with lace rippling about her throat and wrists, her yellow hair, the impatient blue eyes turned seaward, the thin lips irritable and tender. She was dainty and pure—that was the first idea she gave you—her very skin had a pearly tinge in it. A faint rose perfume hung about her, as it always did, gathered, one was sure, from real flowers.

There was nothing here surely from which Miss Corson need have turned her eyes with a quick, cold sinking of the heart. Berenice Lamorce was like countless young women belonging to good-blooded, cultured families in America whom one meets, fresh, clear-brained, light-hearted, generous, with all the aroma of home-life yet breathing in all their silly, charming ignorances. With Berry her life of singular solitude had made her yet more innocent and credulous, so Mary Corson's good sense judged her; yet, from the first moment of their meeting, there had sprung up in her mind an odd repugnance to her, and now it suddenly took shape and color.

She was not a nervous nor superstitious woman, nor given to morbid fancies. But in that moment, as the sunlight flashed over the figure opposite to her, a sudden terror came to her, unreasonable, ludicrous, yet which dragged at her like a cold hand at her heart. And Mary's heart was tough-muscled as her body, she herself would have told you.

A shadow of danger coming, swift, sharp, terrible, a vague perception of an element in Berry's nature foreign to her own—a something which she could never touch or combat. The very name of it, in her secret thought, struck confusion into Mary's well-ordered brain; common sense, with its broad, blessed, reasonable daylight vanished, and she shivered

like a child trembling in the dark before this morbid terror.

In after years she used to think how different her own life might have been had she heeded this warning—brought the skiff to land, and turned her back forever on the beach, and on the woman on whom her coming was to bring so sudden and strange a fate.

"The very breakers," she said once, "that I had known all my life, looked, for the moment, unfamiliar and threatening. But I was driven on." She felt as much remorse about it as a reasonable, even-tempered woman ever feels for any mistake or error. At the time she put out her hand to the rudder uncertainly.

"Going ashore?" Berenice looked up with a smile of sudden relief; but stopped on meeting Miss Corson's eyes fixed on her with a suspicious terror.

"No. Let us go on—a little way out to sea," with a short, uneasy laugh.

Berry fancied that there was something constrained and unnatural in her voice. Meanwhile Miss Corson's fancy disappeared with her own scoffs at it. It was, doubtless, the memory of some old story she had heard about these people, hanging in her brain like a cobweb.

After that the boat drifted slowly out through the mouth of the inlet into the low shore breakers. The tide was turning. Presently she asked Berenice to lay down the oars, finding that she really knew nothing whatever about rowing. There was no wind; the under-tow now and then undersweeping the breakers, washed them a few furlongs out; but ordinarily the boat merely rocked to and fro with an easy cradling motion.

There was presently a perceptible clearing and lightening in the air, which had been damp and heavy all day; a break in the clouds, which had heaped themselves on the top of the setting sun, trying to smother out the few rays which he had heart to give; pale-orange light began to tinge the sky behind the pine-woods on shore; and then a soft, west wind sprang up, blowing off the land, bringing the astringent smells of the pine-woods, of freshly kindled wood-fires in the village, and more unsavory scents from the fisheries. It rippled the vast purple plane of water beyond; the foamy caps hardly enough defined, however, to catch the glitter of the quickening light.

Far out at sea, one or two mackerel schooners and a yacht drifted idly, mere outlines traced in black against the pale sky-line.

Berenice's eyes were fastened on one boat which came in nearer, making for a headland,

above them. Her sight was keener than Mary's, for she got up quickly to wave her hand in answer to some greeting.

"That is Richard's boat, Miss Corson. That is Dick himself in the bow," her eyes shining, and lips apart.

"Yes." Mary put up her eye-glass, and let it fall indifferently. She had caught a glimpse of Berry's brother as she arrived that afternoon at the farm-house, making his way rapidly out to the stables. A boorish-looking fellow, she thought. One of the most annoying considerations about this visit of ~~Amelia~~ (her exploring expedition, she termed it, in which she had been sent by the civilized part of the family to discover the renegade branch of it,) had been that one of the barbarians that she was to attempt to reclaim was a man, young, half buccaneer, half bully, it was said; possessing, in short, his father's fierceness and frivolity *rechauffé*, with no trace of his better nature. (Old Lainorce had been no favorite with his wife's family—the Corsons.)

Mary sat leaning over the gunwale, the crisp cold of the salt water sliding through her fingers, her artist's eye losing not a flicker of light on the creamy surf, nor the silvery flash of a bird's wing overhead. It was intensely still, only the slow splash of the retreating tide on the beach broke the silence; and now and then the sullen gurgle from a school of porpoises plunging in and out of the water. She gave herself up to the quiet and glowing, drowsy heat.

She was, of all women, the one to taste keenly the pleasure of the moment passing, whether she owed it to a racy book, or a high-tinted sunset. She was past her first youth, when a girl's thoughts and feelings are apt to go tottering about on as light, fantastic footing as her body. She had never had husband, child, or lover, to chain her fancy to one mooring; it drifted easily—drifted now entirely into mere sensuous pleasure.

The light so slowly faded, as the evening crept on, that she scarcely noted its going. When she looked shoreward, however, the dim, red sparkles from candles in the village windows began to glimmer through twilight: the clear orange flame in the west had dulled into brown, flaky clouds, like scattered ashes; the yacht and schooners had disappeared; and across the sea, no longer purple and glowing, intranced the impenetrable night-mist walling out the horizon. Mary gathered herself up, and dipped the ears with a half sigh. "It is time to land," she said.

"Yes."

The girls put all of their strength into their strokes; the skiff swayed uneasily for a moment, then drifted steadily on its way, obliquely through the easy swell, out to sea.

"I do not understand," said Mary. "It must be that you pull against me, Berenice. Stop rowing," bending to her own work until the hot perspiration oozed out on her forehead and upper lip. But it was to no purpose; the boat only increased its speed, sweeping on rapidly against her rowing, against the rudder, against the tide, which had turned by this time and was coming in.

Miss Corson, at last baffled and perplexed, aching and sore in every joint, threw down her oars and stood up, shading her eyes with her hand while she strained them, first seaward, and then to land. Still the same deadly quiet; the soft air scarcely breathing; the water beneath her dark-blue and glassy. But the change in its color told to even her inexperienced eye the terrible story; they were off of the bar—and out on the fathomless ocean.

The boat shot on silently and swift, as if guided by some invisible hand beneath.

Mary's mouth grew parched—a lump came up in her throat. She got down on her knees, afraid to move for fear of upsetting the boat, and stretching over pulled at the girl's dress. "For God's sake!" she cried, "what is this? Have you turned dumb and blind?"

But Berenice, who was a child, after all, only shivered and hid her head closer in her hands, drawing sharp, terrified sobs; crying out the same half-dozen words over and over again, first on God, and then on Dick. Mary saw that, whatever the danger might be, she fully understood it, but had no mind to explain.

"I don't know that it matters much," Mary said, getting up with a laugh, oddly hoarse and loud. "We are on straight path enough." It would not be a long one.

Mary had often looked forward to these last minutes just preceding death, thought how grand with their real meaning her past days would rise before her, doubtless, ere they faded forever before the slow dawning of that new and higher life; how her soul would, swelling, mount from one lofty thought to another, like the diapason of a song, absorbed at last into the absolute harmony.

She did not find lofty thoughts come at her bidding. She realized first, that if the boat was not checked, they would be engulfed in the whirlpool, or whatever it was, which she now saw was sucking them down. She saw that it

would need but two or three minutes to do it; she shrieked this out to Berenice shrilly, her eyes scorched for a moment with a hot light—patting her hair with both her hands. Then she checked herself and knelt, looking down over the gunwale into, or at, the blue, slippery surface, thinking it must be the devil, whose hands were strong enough to drag them over it at a rate like this; remembering an odd sermon she heard preached by a Redemptorist priest, of how hell lay only twenty-eight miles underground; thinking “Was this the end? Of all—all—” Remembering her mother, the only human being who had ever tenderly loved her, a little, near-sighted, round-cheeked woman, dressed in a pink-and-green sprigged gown, leaning over the garden-palings, watching for little Mary, hot and dusty, to come from school. She saw her plainly. “I’m going to her! I’m not the same girl I was then! Oh! I don’t want to die—I don’t want to die! I’ve had such a little time to live. Help! help! Richard! Here, Richard!” joining in the other girl’s cry without knowing what she meant. For Mary Corson was only nineteen, and at this sudden facing of death, all the husk of womanish conceit, which her education had put on her, fell off, and left her the creature she was at heart.

Afterward, how long she did not know, it might have been hours or minutes, she felt Berenice’s hand on her, and putting out her arms blindly, she caught her in them passionately, and pulled her down to where she crouched near the bow.

Then came a swift glitter of water, a rushing roar, a rushing darkness, the cold, clammy swash about her feet; and for a moment absolute silence.

Out of this silence and cold came a head—a man’s face. She was weak and lifeless; this face rose on her, at that moment, as if it held all power and vitality. This may have been but the glamor cast on it by her own utter need, and the help he brought; yet certain it is, that the glamor lasted all her life afterward. Whatever other traits she found in this face, it held that meaning for her, apart and different from all other men. She stretched out her arms with a husky cry—the face turned away. Waking sharply and altogether then, she felt the boat slowly rock and turn over, and the chill of the water as she sunk; unmeasurable weights and coldness rose above her.

Through them she dimly saw a man’s figure, with outstretched arms, looking gigantic in the water, and heard a hoarse voice calling; but the man was swimming away from her, and in

an instant the voice was silenced by the roar of the briny surge, as it oozed into her mouth and ears.

CHAPTER II.

A CRY FOR LIFE.

RICHARD LAMORCE had brought his sister safe to shore. He had caught her so quickly, as the boat overturned, that she had scarcely lost consciousness, and had sense enough to let herself float passively as he swam in with her. But he sat down on the sands, and handled her as if she were a child, laying her over his knees, pulling her arms and feet, chasing her with his broad, nervous hand, gnawing at his black mustache, meantime, and looking up at every move she made, to old Mrs. Kirk, who stood by holding a brandy flask, and whose bombazine dress was draggled up to the knees, where she had been paddling in and out the surf like a mad woman; but she almost forgot that, and forgot Berry, seeing the distress in the man’s face.

“She’s not killed! She’s not hurt!” putting her hand for the first time in her life on his shock of black hair, and taking it off as suddenly. “She’s laughing at you, Mr. Dick.”

Dick did not laugh in return. He stopped his rubbing, watched with his lips apart, and breath held, while her wet eyelashes opened, and she looked up, and spoke to him; then he set her down with her back against a log covered with barnacles, and went down to where two or three men were dragging the boat up on shore, and began pacing up and down, swinging his arms about his ponderous body after the manner of a gymnast, and swore half a dozen terrible oaths, at which the men looked up in their lazy, good-humored fashion; whether it was at them or the sea Dick Lamorce was swearing, he certainly could not have told, for the words rattled out as unconsciously as hail-stones from a cloud that has been torn open in a storm.

He stood silent awhile, looking out to sea, then came back to Berry, with a look of relief on his face.

“Here’s your brother, Berenice,” said the old lady, severely, holding out the brandy-flask with an appealing look to him. “I tell her that a thimbleful now, and a hot stew at night of balm-tea, with a dash of Jamaica spirits, and her feet in a mustard-bath, and—”

Richard nodded his head deferentially whenever she stopped to take breath. Women and medicine were as much subjects of awe and mystery to him now as when he was a boy. He stooped to find a white shell, into which he

poured the thimbleful instead of the cup, which Mrs. Kirk had unscrewed from the flask.

"You'll do what we wish, I'm sure, papoose?" watching her with anxious satisfaction as she choked and grew scarlet.

"And now I'll just run up with you, and come back to help George in with——" stopping suddenly.

"She's safe, you're sure, Dick?" as he took her up.

"Sure."

She nestled down again against his wet flannel-shirt, looking up with as sweet and innocent a smile as a baby might when it settles down into its cradle; and no mother ever met the smile with love more tender and anxious than that which shone out of Dick Lamorce's heavy eyes. She was a light weight for a man of his strength, and he almost ran with her up the beach, while she put her arms about his neck, or pulled at his whiskers; for Berry dearly loved to be petted or made much of; but she won but a feeble smile in return. Dick Lamorce was but a poor dissembler, and his heart had just had a sore tug about the girl.

"She has a motherless, uncared-for look," he thought, cursing himself inwardly—for he had periodical fits of self-torture about Berry. Wherever, from Baltimore to Caraccas, in his headlong journeys through the world, he saw a woman whose face wore a more assured look of happiness, or whose gown was of richer stuff than hers, he grew moody and remorseful.

"Who has the child but me? I ought to be like God to her," he thought now, as he went up to the house, gnawing at his mustache, and straining her closer.

After he had put her on her bed, he turned down the stairs again, meeting Mrs. Kirk, who had trotted after him. "You'd better have flannels and a hot bath ready for Miss Corson," he said, "though they are likely to be of little use. Whatever happens, keep it from my sister. I told her the woman was safe."

He lit a segar as he went, trying to bluff down a sharp thought that was beginning to worry him. If "the woman" should be dead? Had he done "the clean thing" by her in leaving her to the boors of fishermen to rescue and bring to shore?

The truth was, that when Richard Lamorce first saw the skiff drawn in by the "sea-pouse," as it is called by the wreckers along that coast, he fell into one of his customary frenzies of rage when any misfortune overtook him, and, after a moment's hesitation, found an object for it in Mary, who had led Berenice into the scrape.

She was a Corson; what better had he to look for from one of her race? Long ago he had determined to keep faith with none of the name. They were a cold-blooded, bigoted herd of fanatics, who had tortured his father's life, and were sending this girl now as a spy on him. By the time he had swam to the sinking boat, it was clear to his brain, at its white heat, that the girl was the murderer of his sister. When she threw up her arms for help, he only motioned out to the men in the boat, the gurgling wave in which she sank, and left her.

It was an hour later now. What if she were dead? He might have saved her. She was a woman. Saying that word over to himself again and again, she began to recede out of the world which Dick Lamorce knew; the world which none knew better than he, in which his mates swore he had always been "the upper dog in the fight." How he had drank, and diced, and fought his way through it, there were some lines on his face which would hint to men like himself. They were never heavier than now, as he went down through the gathering evening to find this woman whom he might have saved, and did not. She was a woman, his guest, and of his mother's blood.

He saw George Dill's little boat swung round just then up on the beach, and the few scattered fishermen gather eagerly about it. It was there, then, living or dead. However, when he went up to them, he was cool and careless, as usual.

"You've brought the lady in, George?" flinging away his segar.

"Yes; here she be, Mr. Lamorce," slowly, pointing to a dark heap at his feet. "I thought, if you were agreeable, she being you friend, and not mine, and, consequently, you having the first claim to dispose of her remains, if remains they be, and not I, though I had the bringing of her in, I thought it would be best to convey her to the bathing-house, yonder, and get her under shelter before trying to bring her to life."

"Very right," gravely replied Mr. Lamorce, and walked quietly along beside the two men, who had put the body on a couple of boards, and carried it with great care up to the little shed, that served as a bathing-house. The other men, loafers about the fishing-station, crowded after, and stood jamming up the door, when they had taken her in. Lamorce ordered them off with a look. They fell back suddenly; there was a glitter in his eye, and a scarlet heat on his high-cheek bones, which they all knew.

"Dick's been drinking to-night," said Ted Adams, with an easy swagger, recovering his dignity as they went off.

"Not out of the ordinary. But when the devil squints out of his face that a-way, he could bring down a bull with his fist."

"It be likely he'll want some arrants run."

They squatted down, therefore, near the shed to be in readiness, knowing that Lamorce threw money about like an Irishman or a fool, however little of it he used to pay his lawful debts. And Dick, comrade or not, was their master; not because he was a burly giant, that could "bring down a bull with his fist," nor for the difference of blood between them; there was a something else in Lamorce, though, when at home, he seined and threw quids for mackerel with them, bare-legged and bare-headed, like themselves; though he told harder stories than any which they could match, and sang songs, which they thanked God their wives and daughters up in the village could not hear; something in him, we say, kept it before them constantly that it was but a shell they saw, and not the real man. It was the lion in the ass's skin—they never forgot that, nor did he.

If the devil was in him to-night, it never had possession of a quieter, simpler-mannered gentleman. He helped Dill lift the girl, wrapped as she was in the fisherman's coat and an old sail, and lay her gently on the floor. Then he knelt to shove up the sand, which had drifted through the cracks, into a pillow.

"I'd better get a barl to roll her outside," said Dill, his hands in his pockets, and head on one side, contemplatively regarding the outstretched body; "or, a bellows, now, she'll need blowin'?" Being a Jerseyman, he was duly deliberate in his suggestions.

"No; the men are bringing a litter and blankets from the house."

Dill went outside to hurry them, rolling across the beach, quietly, giving expression to his excitement by neither shout or halloo.

Lamorce was left alone with his victim, for so he had brought himself to think of her.

The moon had risen in the meantime; the ocean lay darker and vaster beneath it, going on with the old, old story of its wrongs; the long, sinuous line of coast whitened, as though covered with snow; the few headlands to the north, and the forests facing the sea, drew back into vague shadows of themselves; across the lonely waste Dill's retreating figure lengthened and grew spectral as a ghost, while his footsteps sounded clear and echoing in the silence.

Lamorce watched him through the open door until he was out of sight, then he turned to the heap of clothes at his feet. "Something must be done, or her chance isn't worth three-pence," he

thought, pulling off Dill's old sail, which covered her. She was a Corson, and his thoughts of her were not of the gentlest. If she had been a man, he would not have cared three-pence what her chances were; for Dick had seen too much of death, in his knocking about through life, and cared as little when a man "went under," as a fish. Pulling the sail-cloth off, her hand fell out from the wrappings, and lay on the floor—a white, nervous, delicate hand. He looked at it, putting his hands on his knees, and stooping close, but not touching 'it. There was a small gold ring on one finger.

"They did not tell me she was married," said Dick. He was puerile as a woman in somethings; he hesitated a moment, and then proceeded to gratify his curiosity before saving her "chance" for her. He pulled the ring off easily, for the cold, wet finger was shrunken in it—held it up to the moonlight to read a word carved inside. Then Lamorce thrust it on again hastily, gnawing at his mustache. "I believe I killed her; and she's—a woman," he muttered, inwardly.

A woman, pure, gently-bred, Christ-loving, was a something which Dick Lamorce looked at with an exaggerated, far-off awe and reverence, that only those men feel who have dragged themselves through the rank, riotous depths in which he had lived. The word upon the ring was "mother." "She's like Berry," he said, rubbing his hand over his mouth, and looking down on her with a genuine alarm and distress in his face.

Now, as he had only seen the heap of wet cloth, and the delicate dead hand, shining white, in the moonlight, his conclusion was premature; but Dick was a poor logician. He went to work now in earnest, untying the coat which Dill had fastened with a bit of rope, the hot red dyeing his yellow face when he by accident touched her hand. Will it be believed that it was the first pure woman's hand Dick Lamorce had ever touched, except his sister's? He felt that to his heart's core to-night, or he would not have trembled as he did.

Kneeling on one knee, he lifted her head and threw the covering off of her face, pressing heavily at regular intervals on her chest. The head fell back on his arm.

Whether her soul had passed into the land of death, or stopped at its verge, its awful shadow fell upon her face, cleansing it of all conceit or arrogance. Richard Lamorce, looking down on it, saw only a countenance, pure, fastidious, womanly, yet with a shade of melancholy on the large blue-veined lids and firm

mouth. He peered closer, reading it with an eager zest that he had never yet felt in a face before. He noted, in that moment of time, the square jaw, full lips, passionate, dilated nostril, pink-lined and delicate, and was shrewd enough to know what these meant. He forgot, as he read, that she was a Corson—it was many a long year before he remembered it again. A curious atmosphere of womanliness and peace diffused itself about the low-roofed shed, in which the moonlight slept whitely upon the still body. Lamorce became suddenly conscious of the mass of flesh upon his brawny frame; of the air he had chosen to breathe all his life—vile air, drunken and vulgar. He felt as he did once in Madrid, coming upon a white marble figure in a garden, he, in his clothes muddied and soaked, out of a midnight brawl. There, he had slunk away.

The woman's chest heaved at last, the heavy eyelashes quivered. He withdrew his arm quickly and laid her down, rising and standing before her in the door, his arms folded over his chest.

She sighed, thrust out her arms vaguely, closed her eyes again, the man following every motion with breathless eagerness. She muttered something about the cold; but as consciousness returned, she grew silent, for Mary Corson, whether she went out of life or came into it, would say but little about it. But she sobbed under her breath from sheer weakness; back and head ached, for both were badly bruised, as the waves had dashed her against the sides of the skiff before Dill took her into it. This was all merely physical, however. As her soul struggled into the body again from that mysterious journey, of which it dared keep no record even for itself, there was something very pitiful and childish in the terrified, pleading look on her face. If she were dead or not, at first she scarcely knew. Out of the great beyond, where she had gone, she woke to blind darkness and cold; and after that the roar of the incoming tide, the stretch of barren beach, blanched white in the ghostly moonlight, the drifted sand about her, were unfamiliar and uncanny. The first warm, live greeting, which made her hold secure on real life, was the sight of the man standing in the door-way. She struggled up, raising herself on one hand. An undersized man, but with a frame of almost gigantic build in breadth. He did not move. She lay still resting on her hand, looking up in his face, her lips moving without her will, like a child's who does not know whether to sleep or cry. All that she was conscious of

was her own tremulous weakness, and that this man was the embodiment of tremendous physical power—power repressed in absolute repose. Her own life hung by a tenuous thread; a breath would break it, waft it back forever into that eternal sleep; his soul looked broadly out of the clear hazel eyes, instinct with a conquering strength.

"You brought me back?" she said at last, her breath hardly rising above a whisper. He gave a sharp, hissing sound of intense relief, leaning forward, but did not speak.

"I was dead, and you brought me back?"

He shook himself, as if to get rid of some spell. "No. We will talk of that to-morrow."

The sound of these matter-of-fact words dragged her, as nothing else would have done, into life again. She raised herself slowly, sat up, her hands clasped about her knees, looking about her with furtive glances. But, at the motion, every joint and fibre of her body swelled with a dull, excessive pain; her soul swung at low ebb, with hardly a cord left to hold it, to the shore.

"I don't want to die! Must I die?" she cried. She held out her arms to him. He stood stolid, his heavy eyes busy with some misery or problem which he had found in her face. The bleached sands and moonlight melted into one before her; the roar of the tide dulled out like retreating thunder. Richard's square, black figure, framed in the door-way, wavered, and was lost in the twilight. She threw up her arms high above her head, calling on God with all the voice she had left.

Dill shoved himself in between Lamorce and the door-jamb, with a roll of blankets under his arm. He knelt down and wrapped her in it, saying, "She's coming round, Mr. Lamorce."

"I know."

Dill looked at him out of the corner of his eye. "The women 'll bring her about," in a soothing tone.

"Yes."

"In a day or two."

"Where is Tredenick, Dill?"

"Tredenick! D'y'e want the seines to-night?" with a glance at the girl.

"Yes. I must be at the banks by daylight."

"As for Tredenick— Give me a lift, Mr. Richard. The boys have gone down to the point yonner."

Dick gave him a lift with the insensible girl on to the settee, which Mrs. Kirk and two of the farm-hands had brought down. Miss Corson was not heavy, but as he raised her the color went out of his face, leaving it looking

haggard and aged. He watched them almost out of sight; then made a curve over his mouth with his hand, trumpeted to Tredenick, and went down to wait for him nearer the water.

Dill looked at the fair face, with the hair wet, curly rings about it. "The man has the blood of a fish," he said to Mrs. Kirk.

Lamoree squatted down in the curdling surf, apparently only to wash off the mud and kelp from his legs and feet; but he looked seaward. His eyes had grown heavier and more lack-luster in the last half-hour.

I can no more tell you the secret processes going on in Dick Lamoree's brain as he sat there, calculating, half aloud, how long it would take him to reach New York, if he determined to make for his vessel to-morrow, than he could have told you what amount of thinking power lay in those ponderous shadows chasing each other under the shadow of the water, or how much of them was matter, and how much the spirit of God had breathed into their nostrils. People said Dick Lamoree was older than his years; and, in fact, it is likely, that after his last twenty years' career as smuggler, Californian pike, filibuster, and Italian patriot, the ideas that daily went to cover under that mat of coarse hair of his, were stale, and vapid, and rank enough.

He knew the world—as much to repletion as did Solomon; only its juices had been pressed to his lips, more resembling bitter beer than golden goblets of royal wine.

But through all, Lamoree had been a solitary man. He knew that; he never had known it as to-night. Besides, he believed in something better outside of this dirty race-track, which he called the world, and around which he jogged daily, of fighting, trading, amusements that touched his blood like fire on alcohol. This was not the whole of life. There was Berry; there was the sea in some of its humors; there were the Dakota plains, which he had crossed with a wagon-train going to Nevada; the interminable solitudes below, the eternal stars at night overhead. There was the little, sensitive, fiery man, who had been his chum when he was a boy, and who was in a grave, yonder, in the sand under that black walnut. He wondered, sometimes, if he actually slept there. To his mind his father never had slept; he had been awake and alive, touching him in whatever of good or chivalric had stirred his blood in any part of the world. If this burly Russian had never been a mean one—had been a Russian only, and not a bully, he owed it to the fancy he had that the fierce eyes of the little man,

were on him constantly, watching that he kept the blood he had given him pure. These things stood apart from his daily life; they had a place of their own. Usually he thought little about it, only to be glad, in a vague way, that there was a purer air than this which he breathed; a place, white and dry, and set apart, like Gideon's fleece, in the midst of the mud-soaked, cloudy world; a place in which he believed as a child does in heaven, but with which he himself had as little to do.

Sometimes it came home to him. When it did, every nerve of the flesh with which he had sinned owned its reality with a pain and fervor, of which religious, lymphatic people know nothing.

It had come home to him to-night.

Tredenick waited to bring the seines with him, and to bail out the boat. Lamoree sat motionless on the sands, the moonlight vivid and white about his unwieldy, square figure, his head dropped on his chest. By a glance he could see the farm-house—a dark, irregular block against the sparsely-planted trees; in front of it a long, wide stoop, into which open the warm-lighted windows of the parlor. Berry would be there, and the girl who had been taken from him a few minutes ago. They seemed to his heated fancy to belong to that world from which he was shut out—a some place pure, heartsome, warm, near to God; he, without, in the darkness and cold.

"That's all right," he muttered, half aloud. He had brought down his shoes from the bathing-house, and began to shake the pebbles out of them, and to put them on. He stopped once, touching the flannel-sleeve of his shirt.

Her head had rested there. In all the world he did not believe there was anything so pure as that face; and yet there were lines in it that had brought them near akin. "She would understand me," he thought; and then he felt, as all grave men and women do, how utterly alone he had been.

"It seemed natural for her to call on God, as Berry would call to me. I was glad to hear that," he went on muttering, with a simple-hearted smile breaking up the heavy outline of his features. They clouded again quickly. They had opened a door of that room yonder, so that the light could stream out; he could distinguish their figures passing about. "They opened it for me," he said; "but it's too late." He filled his pipe and lighted it; then with his hands thrust in his pockets, and his head down on his chest, sat thinking. The pipe went out, but he did not heed it; the moon stood still in the west, cloudy armies passing her by.

mounting the sky, and disappearing slowly beyond the sea. They came and went in long procession far overhead, silent and swift. If there were any meaning in their beauty; if, in their grand, dumb language, they had a message to give this man of the world, from which he was shut out, of the God who made them, he knew nothing of it. He was reading the significance of other scenes than these.

He got up at last. Lamorce's eyes were remarkable in so rugged a face; they were hazel in color, powerful and kindly, but with a melancholy in them like the memory of a great hope lost long ago out of life.

He looked steadily to the far-off lighted door again; then pulled his fur cap over his forehead. "It's too late," he said, and went slowly over the sands to meet Tredenick with the seines.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD STORY OF HERCULES AND OMPHALE.

MARY CORSON could have given you a dozen hygienic reasons for despising old-fashioned feather-beds; yet she lay in one to-day, finding it soft, and white, and lulling as the very bosom of sleep. She lay with her hands clasped over her head, the lawny folds of her night-gown sleeve framing the pale, cleanly-cut face, watching Berenice. Now, when Berry looked at her guest to-day, she fancied that the intolerant, critical sharpness was somehow lost out of the big, brown eyes, and so found her own awkward fever cooling down and leaving her herself again.

The chamber was large, low-ceiled, hung after old Peter Lamorce's French taste, with gray paper dotted with bunches of moss-roses; the bright afternoon sunlight crept slowly over the matting on the floor; the salt sea air waved the muslin window-curtain drowsily to and fro. Mrs. Kirk, little shawl and all, was seated erect in the dining-room below, darning table-cloths. There was a savory whiff yet in the air, and a relishing taste in Mary's mouth of the little meal of roast oysters, and cup of rare coffee, which she had just finished.

"I knew you detested slops," Berry had said, as she carried away the tray; and then sat down, just in sight, to sew, ready to talk when spoken to.

"You are a born nurse," was Mary's verdict, after a little silence; but after that the girls talked but little.

Miss Corson was beginning uneasily to perceive that she was in a new atmosphere, and one to which all her Boston training had not

acclimated her. The queer lives that these Lamorces had led of utter solitude, with books and nature, was the cause, she supposed, of the mixture in this girl of crudeness and refinement. It was distasteful to her. As for the unknown brother— She picked at the tufted coverlid nervously. She could breathe better back among her own kind. She was no Descartes, to go about unmaking herself to test new identities. What were these people to her, after all? A hot flush crept over her face and neck. Before it had died out, she pulled herself up in the bed, and drew her blotting-book toward her.

"I will write to Ralph to come for me," she said, and after writing awhile, added, absently, without looking up, "I have had but a glimpse of your brother, Berenice. Mr. Lamorce is here?"

"No. He went down to the Banks."

"But the fishing boats remain out only a day or two?" quickly.

"Richard wrote to me that he would take the schooner for New York. If he does, he will sail from there to Laguayra. He had but a week to stay with me."

She stopped to change her pen-point. "Then I never shall see him again?" slowly.

"I suppose not;" and after a long pause, "he did not say good-by to me," brushing her hand, now and then, quietly over her cheeks.

Miss Corson's pen moved vehemently over the page. She wrote thus:

"I would advise you, Ralph, at once to decline Mr. Rigdon's offer, no matter how tempting the sum. How often must I urge on you the fact, that your aim now should be not money-making, but the elimination of your own peculiar creative power from the influence of your studies, and to gain the free handling of it? No matter into how many errors it leads you—a child must learn to stand alone before he can walk. You are in danger of becoming a mere copyist; you drift now into this school, now into that, of art, through your quick and liberal perception of the true and good in each. But you remain in none. You have individual power—find it out, make your own style, and reform it afterward. If you were to accept Mr. Rigdon's proposal, by the time you had faithfully copied so powerful and unique a picture, you would find yourself a poor plagiarist from it ever afterward: you would have eaten Haschish, and part of your brain would never waken again. I am talking in the roughest English, dear old fellow; but you need it, and I know you will love me none the less for it."

She stopped to give the pillow an impatient pull, setting her teeth together. How could she tell him that he needed more than this? Stamina, back-bone, the sort of grit that made a man? Oh! that God had made *her* the man! She knew just how the "poor old fellow" would pore over her letter; the anxious look that would gather in his handsome face; the furious haste with which he would go to work to obey her hint; eager, hot, and grave, over his easel for days, until some new whim would send him off steaming on another tack.

She had taken up her pen again.

"I wish, Ralph, you would reconsider your determination not to come down. I want to go home; and besides that, I have found a study for you. A Miranda, Yarico, any Gentle savage that you please. Seriously, I fancy that there are some rare traits and tints in the beauty of this Berenice Lamorce, worth taking note of, to use in your art. For the rest, the girl is gentle and taciturn, but oddly repulsive to me. She has lived absolutely without companions, except these Jersey fishers and wreckers, and a case of old books, *Spectators*, Bunyan's books, old plays of Anne's time. The effect is quaint and ludicrous enough. Fancy a chit of seventeen, with the grave, reticent courtesy which Cœlebs would have wanted in his wife. What could have induced old Peter Lamorce to bury his children in this place? I was but a child when he came here, giving up a wide practice in New Orleans; but I have a dim remembrance of a rumor in the family of some disgrace or shame to be hid. There is an old Scotch house-keeper here who might serve as a strong box to hold the secrets and skeletons of a dozen families. One other curious point about this girl—— But no matter. Come, and judge for yourself."

She intended to speak of her strange foreboding connected with Berenice, but stopped, laughing at her own weakness. Yet it was that broken sentence which determined Ralph Corson to join his sister. There must, he reasoned, be attractive metal in the girl to win so many critical words from Mary, who usually ignored women altogether. Corson had great curiosity about Dick Lamorce, having heard some stories about the man; but Mary had, he noticed, forgotten him entirely.

When Miss Corson had folded her letter, gummed the square envelope, and addressed it in a bold, clear hand, she looked at it for a minute or two, and then idly began sketching faces on a blank sheet of paper. Always the same face in different positions, but in all

eager, irresolute, with large, sensitive eyes; the fingers of the right-hand on the chin, as if playing on it uneasily. She had a clever use of her pencil; the scrawl had an oddly lifelike look. Mary heaved a great sigh, as she pushed papers and books across the bed.

Berenice saw her jaded look. "Let me show you my treasures," said she. "Maybe that will pass the afternoon away. Your letter has been too hard work for you."

There were two black walnut chests of drawers in the room, with spindle legs and little oval mirrors over them. Berry began to pull out one drawer after another, piling the contents on bed and chairs, until Miss Corson, who was not so very far out of her childhood, after all, sat up with red cheeks and laughing eyes. There were Japanese silks, feather-flowers from the Brazils; marvelous ivory and pearl carvings from Canton; ferny sea-weeds on rice-paper, brilliant in color as a humming-bird's wing; porcelain cups set on basket-work, thin and opaline as bubbles—whole drawers full of the like.

Mary Corson drew a long breath of pleasure after she had turned them over for half an hour. In all the scents, and colors, and shapes, there was a something that touched her like a rare perfume; the purest, delicatest woman, going over the world, would have brought back just such fanciful hints of beauty as these. She seemed to weary of the eternal refrain of "Dick," coming in with each, and contracted her black brows as Berenice ended with,

"He has a chest under his berth in every voyage, and, wherever he goes, buys some remembrancer for me. It is the only journal that he keeps. When he unpacks his chest, it is like reading back over a long diary."

Now the fancy of this coarse ruffian, (as she had heard Ralph call him,) going about the world, linking the idea of his sister to every beautiful, delicate thing that came in his way, made Mary Corson's eyes wet, as if it rubbed against some old sore in her heart. She remembered Dick Lamorce's face. Ralph would say, no doubt, that he could cut such an one of ore with a hatchet. Maybe so! Yet this was genuine ore; the man might be a gambler, or a murderer; but the affection that looked out of such eyes would be stern and enduring as a rock. Now, Ralph—— Miss Corson's body was weak and bruised just now; so the starved heart had a chance to assert itself, crying desperately, as it had done for years, for a something which had never come to her; it made her eyes jealous to notice trifles which showed

that all other women were loved—she, alone, passed by.

But she said, laughing, to Berry, "You ought to sing Luther's hymn, 'A Mountain Fortress is my God.' Of all people, I think, you have a solid foundation to build on."

Berenice understood her. She turned from the drawer, in which she was smoothing away some stuffs, with a scared look on her face. "I love Dick," she stammered. "But there is something beyond Dick, Miss Corson."

"Yes? Now for me," (closing her eyes indifferently, for she had her creed at her tongue's end,) "I am no mystic. The god I've given my life to is in this world." She took up the paper on which she had been scrawling, looking at it with a bitter irony. "It's not entirely what old Luther would have called a 'mountain fortress, or a strong bulwark and weapon.' When you have stored away all your treasures, Berenice, I think I will try to go down stairs. I am burning up with fever here."

"As you will," with an anxious look at her hot face and dry lips. While Berenice went from the bed to the drawers, putting away the last trifles, Mary lay humming to herself the end of the old hymn-verse,

*"Er hilft uns frei aus aller Noth,
Die uns jetzt hat betroffen."*

She had neither a strong nor a sweet voice, and Berry did not understand the words; yet,

as she listened, a heavy depression began to creep over her. The sound of them, broken by Mary's pleasant, common-sense remarks, gave her a sense of more real pain, smothered, kept down, than all of Mrs. Kirk's long, lamentable ditties, or homilies, on the discipline of life. She could have cried for pity of this woman, who kept her off, awkward, and scared.

Mary, as she talked, or hummed her tune unconsciously, looked over Berenice's shoulder into the glass; she could see the girl in it. "It is the face of the morning!" she almost cried aloud, its loveliness struck her with such sudden meaning. "Her eyes are blue and tender as the dawn; there are clear rose-tints under her milk-white flesh; her hair is about her face like a golden cloud!" Then she got up in the bed that she could better see her own face behind Berry's, pale, sallow, square, with black brows.

Like all women, whose strength lies in their brain, she overrated the power of beauty. "What wonder that she had lived as—she had lived?" she thought, her eyes fixed on the two faces as if she were charmed by a snake.

She got up presently and dressed, loathing to touch herself; making miserable jokes at her own ugliness, secretly, while she questioned Berry about the crops of that country; while she watched her simple, brilliant beauty, with keen jealousy, laughable, but very pitiful.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A LOVE AND A PASSION.: A STORY OF SUNSET LAND. CHAPTER IV.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON,

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A LOVE AND A PASSION. A STORY OF SUNSET LAND.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON,

AUTHOR OF "IN THE GRANDE RONDE VALLEY," "SAVED BY A TELEPHONE," "NIL," "IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS," ETC.

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CHAPTER IV.



HAT evening, Rouan took the train for Puget Sound. All night long, he lay awake, while the train went wheeling through the tunnel-darkness, thinking of Helen Dudley—

while he watched, in a dazed way, the sparks glancing past his window, and the great columns of white steam curling through the soft air. The regular rock-a-bye motion and the monotonous clickety-click lulled his senses; his window was open, and sometimes, when on some high trestle the train slackened to a snail-pace and there was no rattling of bolts or straining of couplings, he heard the clear rushing of waters flowing along rock floor-ways and the lonely piping of mellow-throated frogs.

Once, he put his feverish head out into the cool night, and saw twin stars sleeping in a black pool of water—bringing a message from heaven, even as her eyes brought a message from her own soul.

But with morning came Seattle, that busy bustling Queen of the West; where all is hurry and worry and confusion; where dollars slip out of one's hands far more easily than cents in an Eastern city; where people work and scheme and kill for money, and the blue sea laughs in the sunlight and rebukes them, unheard.

A few days in Seattle sufficed to bring Rouan to his senses.

"I have made a fool of myself," he thought, pulling himself together. "I have idled away a whole month in Portland

instead of working. Here it is May, and work promised for July not even begun. I must find some quiet nook on this blue Sound, and go to work. I must, first of all, however, make up my mind to forget her!"

So he drifted down that shining inland sea until he came to Bellingham Bay, lying in the shape of a mighty horse-shoe in the morning light, with the green Washington shores reaching almost around it; to the south, the chaste Olympics rise into the purple mist, and in the east the mighty dome of all the Cascades leans to the sky, making fit setting for that ocean-lake.

When Rouan stepped ashore, that May morning, the dreamy beauty of the scene soothed him, and he felt the overpowering desire to write throbbing along his full veins.

A new wooden town, bare of paint or adornment, clambered over the hills that sloped gradually, green as emeralds, to the bay; a long narrow pier ran out into the water fully a mile, and red-bloused village-girls leaned against the railings, watching the passengers, with shy eyes. Here and there, a fisherman stood with his line cast into the water, and a pile of sparkling fish at his feet; two or three saw-mills sent regular whirring shrieks across the quiet air; great fir forests arose, like solid impenetrable walls, behind the little clearing, and the sound of the axe and hammer and occasional thundering blasts mingled with the sweet peaceful tones of nature.

Glancing seaward, Rouan felt his heart swell. The blue snow-capped waves came rolling in, to break into a million particles on the pebbled beach, and restless sea-gulls dropped, with one glistening gleam, down through the purplish mist that hung over the water; while, in the far golden distance, blown sails drifted out to the ocean.

Rouan selected a "boarding-house" in preference to a hotel, because there was a green lawn on all sides, and old twisted fruit-trees, now one tangle of white and pink blooms. The house was an old white rambling one, that had been built before a town was thought of; but the windows were big and low, and the rose-vines that peeped in were already loaded with buds.

A tall thin old lady met Rouan, and surveyed him with looks of mild distrust.

"Indeed, sir," she said, with a benevolent air, "I wouldn't hurt nawbody's feelin's fur th' leetle money there's in th' board'n' business. But I'm mighty partickler 't who I take; so, I'll hev t' know ye's business 'fore I could take yees—though, 'pun my word 'n' hon'r, yees 's most genteel-look'n'!"

Rouan took off his hat with a low bow.

"I am charmed that my appearance is prepossessing," he said. "If you will allow me to come in, I think I can satisfy you as to my respectability."

"Cert'n'ly; walk right inter th' liv'n'-room." And she opened the door wide.

The "liv'n'-room" was large and cool and shaded, nicer in every way than Rouan had expected to find it. He threw himself wearily into a large chair.

"The only reason I spoke o' fit, sir," said the woman, looking at the full blue veins on his brow, and unconsciously giving him a corner in her motherly heart, "'s b'cause I only want Lord-fear'n' peoples 'n my house. Ther' was a painter-feller here onct, 'n' I do think's it's wicked t' go about a-doin' nothin' from mornin' till night but look 't th' sky 'n' th' sea."

Rouan colored slightly.

"I am afraid you will banish me, then," he said, in a disappointed tone. "I only came here to rest—I need rest."

"Yees shall stay," said the woman, her voice trembling a little; "yees look like my son—my unfort'nit son, sir, what went daft 'n' killed hisself fer th' love of a married woman, sir!"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Rouan, with a cold chill at his heart.

"Yes, sir," and the woman rocked slowly back and forth, with her hands clasped about her knees, "drownded hisself off Dead Man's Point, sir, 'n' I can't abide th' sight o' th' water never sence. But yees shall stay, b'cause yees looks like him."

She led the way through several wide passages to another large cool room, smelling sweetly of lavender and dried rose-leaves. A high snowy bed occupied one corner; there were also a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, a small table, and two comfortable chairs; a bright rag-carpet, carefully woven in stripes, adorned the floor, and at the windows were white curtains hanging in full soft folds, drawn back by yellow ribbons.

At one of these windows, a girl was kneeling, her elbows upon the sill, her face resting in the pink cup of her hands.

Rouan, following her eyes, was delighted to find that no trees broke the view of the sea from this side of the house, and that the waves rolled up within fifty yards of the orchard, making a low booming sound along the shore, now that the tide was flowing in.

"Nem!" said the woman, with some asperity. "Get up from that winder, will yees? Can't yees find nothin' better t' do then t' set ther 'n' look 't th' Sound from ower t' ower? Fill them pitchers!"

"Them pitchers is filled," replied the girl, quietly. She arose as she spoke, and stood tall and haughty and queenly, before them. In her way, she was the most perfect specimen of womanhood Rouan had ever seen, and he could not remove his eyes from her.

Her form was beautifully rounded; her arms and shoulders, bare and smooth as satin, were of a rich olive tinge, as was also her face, with a warm color lying in her cheeks. Her hair was black, and lay in curling rings about her temples and close to her neck; her eyes were so black and shining, they made Rouan remember those two stars in the pool that bitter night he had left Portland, and his soul grew sick at the remembrance.

"She's not my reel dawter, sir," said Mrs. Mowber, when the girl had left the room. "I jest 'dopted her, though I do treat her jest like my own."

She drew aside the curtains, patted the cushions in the chairs, brushed some imaginary dust from the table with her kerchief, and Rouan found himself alone. Alone—in a big homely country-house, with sweet scents and flowers all about him, and an unbroken view of the blue rolling sea!

He sat down by the window and tried to concentrate his thoughts upon his work. Suddenly the girl "Nem" came before his

vision, as she had looked when she arose from the floor. Why not put her into his novel? A Western tale should certainly have a typical Western heroine; where could he find one more characteristic than "Nem"? Besides, he would have daily opportunities to study her—her dress, her language, her ways. With a long sigh of relief, he finally decided that Nem should grace the pages of his next novel. He then threw himself wearily upon his soft white bed.

"Killed himself for a married woman!" he muttered, a great drowsiness stealing over him. He heard the tide swelling along the sands; the sea-breeze blew shoreward, full and strong, dashing the wet fragrance of lilacs into the room; the droning hum of many happy bees and the scream of a seagull stole to him.

"Killed himself for a married woman!" he repeated, now half asleep. "And—he looks—like me!"

Then he sank into profound dreamless sleep.

When the sun sank, like a great wheel of gold, behind the purple hills, that night, leaving its glorious radiance, like a dead man's fame, to make the world mad of admiration, and long pale tints blent with glowing colors across the waters, Rouan, sauntering down to the beach, came upon the girl. She was kneeling down upon the wet sands left bare by the ebbing tide, gathering shells and filling her dress with them.

She did not see him until he was quite close to her; she started then, and for a moment her hands trembled with vague confusion; a rich beautiful color stole into her browned cheeks; her dress slipped out of her hands, and the pink sea-shells rattled down upon the sand, clinking softly one against the other.

"Well," said Rouan, with a smile of admiration at her confusion, "I am in great luck to find you down here this evening; I have been lonely. Are you ever lonely?"

"Lonely?" repeated the girl, in a tone of great bitterness. "I am always lonely. I 'most die o' bein' lonely, sometimes."

"Not much society?" questioned Rouan, with an amused smile.

Nem looked at him, her fine lip curling with scorn.

"Don't think I'm so small-natured 's t' regret that," she replied, coldly. "I know

all about fash'nable society: I've been t' board'n'-school 'n' attended their receptions 'n' balls 'n'—'n' all those things: 'n' I do hate 'em!"

"You hate them?" said Rouan. "Yet I think that could scarcely be called society."

"It's enough society fer me. I hated all th' girls, with their powdered faces 'n' bleached hair!"

"And how about the men?"

"I hated them too!" she replied, with something like a sob, looking at him defiantly. "Insignificant, curled, pritty—oh, I did hate them!"

"I imagined," said Rouan, thoughtlessly, "that you had always lived here: that you had never been out of sight of Bellingham Bay."

She colored deeply.

"I know what yuh mean," she said, after a little hesitation, speaking calmly, with evident difficulty. "I dress like th' people here, 'n' I talk like the people here. I know better, though," she looked at him wistfully, "indeed I do. When I am away from home, I talk 'n' dress like—like other people. B't when I'm here, they all talk th' one langweege, 'n' I fall into it so quick like; it's so easy to run yer words together, 'n' s' hard t' remember, unless"—and unconsciously the girl gathered the whole truth into a nutshell—"unless yer born to 't 'n th' first place."

Rouan, deeply moved, was silent.

"Only," said Nem, looking away across the sea, with great tears gathering in her eyes, "only, I wish—I do wish—you had not spok'n o' fit. I knew 't all s' well b'fore, b't t' hev 't put into words—oh, 't hurts s' much worse!"

"Forgive me," said Rouan, hurriedly. "But indeed you misunderstood me. Come, let us have pleasanter thoughts. What do you do to pass away the time?"

"I have a boat 'n' a horse 'n' a dog," replied Nem, smiling, though her eyes were wet.

"Do you row?" Rouan looked at her firm girlish arm, with a look of strength lying beneath its dimples—quite the loveliest arm he had ever seen, he thought for an instant: then he drew in his breath shivering, in a very agony of remembrance.

"Row?" repeated the girl. "I should think I did row. I'll take you out often, 'f

yuh care t' go. I love t' go when a storm 's comin' over from Lummi way, 'n' th' great waves beat up about yuh, 'n' th' wind cuts through yuh like a knife."

"I think I would like that too," said Rouan, musingly, carried away by her enthusiasm. "I am sure I would like it—with you."

"With me?" repeated Nem, with a little startled wonder in her tone, her earnest eyes turning to his.

"What a very child you are!" he said, softly, speaking more to himself than to her. In the caressing way that, with him, meant so little, while it seemed to mean so much, he laid his fingers upon her round wrist—as he would have, indeed, laid them upon the wrist of a little child, gently and kindly.

"I wonder," he thought, as he went across the sands alone in the long pale light that sifted over the water, "I wonder if I can forget that other man's wife? I shall try, at all events, with all my strength and will. And now, to write! Thanks to my luck in finding that girl down there to-night, I shall have no difficulty in getting the first chapter."

But Nem sat on the sands until far into the night; until the last glow had paled in the sky, and the last receding wave had slipped away from her feet; until the violet skies were dotted with stars, and soft-toned frogs made sweet the summer air. Then, with a long sigh, she arose and went home.

"With me!" she repeated, looking up at the light that fell from his window. "With me!"

CHAPTER V.

"Days that are dreamy and drowsy,
On seas that are sun-checked blue;
Birds flashing down to the water,
Zephyrs and bare arms to woo;
Lips that were made just for kissing;
Hands that are clinging and cool;
Music, and passionate kisses—
Will make, of a wise man, a fool."

AND Rouan was not a wise man; he was not even a strong man. Trying, as he was, to forget Helen Dudley, he yet found pleasure in the companionship of Nem. He smiled each time he glanced at the bunch of flowers that daily found its way to the little table at the head of his bed; he found sweet old-fashioned herbs among his linen, and knew that Mrs. Mowber's hardened fingers

had not placed them there; once, even, his hose were neatly darned: he did not wear darned hose, and threw them contemptuously into the fire, but a tender expression went across his face as he remembered the brown busy fingers that had toiled over them.

Once, he was lying in his hammock, which was swung out under a heavily-loaded apple-tree whose branches drooped to the ground all about him. It was late afternoon, and he was sinking into oblivion to the drowsy humming of bees, when a light step came through the rustling grass, and Nem paused beside him.

He opened his eyes lazily, and looked at her.

"I—I—I've brought yuh a pillah," she said, in an embarrassed way, her eyes sinking beneath his. "I thought 't be more comf'terble with somethin' under yer head."

"Thank you ever so much," he replied, languidly. "Now, if you will lift my head—it really aches—and put the pillow under—"

She colored deeply. Rouan studied her with drooping lids, which gave a certain tenderness to his eyes. She blushed differently from any other woman, and he wished to describe that blush in his novel. While he was trying to find words, he felt her arm slipping timidly under his neck.

The last apple-blossoms of the year drifted down, like flecks of white light, through the purple dusk that hung beneath the trees; a wild canary perched—a flame of yellow among the green—above them and poured out a flood of song.

A more worldly woman would have performed the little act of courtesy, and thought no more about it; but Nem was shy, and knew no arts whereby to conceal her embarrassment.

As Rouan regarded her in surprise at her confusion, her blush became too deep and painful to be borne, and, with some hurried excuse, she hastened away through the drooping branches; they closed behind her, and Rouan was alone.

"Well!" he ejaculated, with a long breath, rising on his elbow and looking after her, "she is the most original bit of femininity I have ever met. What eyes she has! And where did I ever see such a figure?"

He shivered and dropped back upon his pillow, remembering Helen Dudley's slim girlish figure and high-bred face.

It was perhaps an hour later that Nem came back to him.

"I thought," she said, with shy eyes "yuh might'nt notess, 'n' so I'd tell yuh—that I made the pillas myself—for yuh I thought that yuh might like 't."

Rouan turned his head to look at it, and the odor of sweet sap-filled fir-needles stole to him. The cushion was richly embroidered upon black satin. It was a very ordinary affair indeed, to Rouan, whose whole life had been spent among satin cushions; and how was he to know that she had saved her pocket-money this whole month—it was now June—to purchase the materials?

"It was kind of you, indeed," he said, lightly, his mind deep upon his writing. "You have too much work, as it is; don't do anything for me again."

That was all. After those days of stolen work, those worries over the blending of colors, those secret journeys for chenilles, those happy imaginings of his surprised delight! "It was kind of her, indeed; but she must not do anything for him again!" That was all.

She left him, with blinding tears in her eyes and a swelling heart, and in her soul the first pang of a new-born love wounded in its very birth. What woman who has loved does not know what Nem suffered as she went from him?

Rouan had no suspicion of it. He swung under the trees, and traced pages and pages of his work in his mind, and felt vaguely pleased when the scent of the fir-needles was wafted past his nostrils, and swore softly when the embroidery scratched his cheek.

When he went in to dinner, Nem did not look at him, which amused him greatly. Mrs. Mowber, seeing his eyes follow Nem from the room, said confidentially:

"Somethin's th' matter with Nem to-day. She's allus queer enough, th' Lord know, b't to-day she's queer'n I ever see. Walked a mile, sir, t' pack a heavy baskit fer a poor ol' woman, 'n' w'en I jawed 'er fer wastin' 'er time she jest flared up like mad, sir, 'n' said doin' good wasn't never wastin' nawbody's time, 'n' that's all ther was t' live fer, anyhow! Never did see 'er s' queer, 'n' 't kinder tuk my breath away."

"How old is Miss Nem?" asked Rouan, suddenly.

"Eighteen, sir, this June. Lawsy me!"—and she cast a sharp glance at him—"I don't know what we'd do without Nem. Hope she won't never git married. She ain't got b't one fault, sir, 'n' that's a wicked temper, 'n' she ain't God-fearin'. Actully told me onct, w'en I were remonstratin' with 'er, that she didn't believe ther were a heaven and hell fer folks, unless ther were one fer anyimals too! Did yuh ever hear o' sech a thing, sir?" And the good woman looked sorely troubled. "Right down wickid, I call 't, sir, b't I s'pose 't all comes 'n the natyer."

Later that same evening, Rouan was wandering down to the beach as usual, when a strange thing occurred. Nem was sitting upon the sands, and he was making his way indolently toward her, when cries attracted his attention at the side of the long wharf that ran out into the water. A young girl had fallen overboard, and was struggling in the surf. The distance was not great, yet, for one second, he hesitated. Nem turned, saw his irresolute air, and immediately leaped into the bay. Rouan shouted and ran after her, but she did not pause, striking out with bold even strokes. He saw her arms gleaming through the water, and her long black hair trailing behind her.

"How that girl swims! I wonder if there is anything she cannot do?" he thought, as he plunged into the water.

He swam with all his strength, yet she distanced him to the rescue, and he found her supporting the half-unconscious girl until assistance should arrive. She had saved a life; and there was on her happy face a glow brighter than the glory of the setting sun. A boat now came to the rescue, and the child was lifted in and placed upon blankets.

"You must get in also," said Rouan, authoritatively.

"I?" And the girl laughed, still with those happy eyes. "Why, I am good fer three times the distance! If yuh're afraid"—she turned her drenched glowing face to him, and her glance sank into his—"don't come."

He followed her leisurely, his pulses bounding with delightful admiration of her. Presently he noticed that she was swimming more slowly, and, as he came up beside her, he saw that she was panting.

"Help me!" she said, faintly, and was sinking when he caught her.

"Put your arm over my shoulder!" he commanded, and she obeyed, trembling and deadly white.

In a few moments, they reached the shore, and he lifted her in his arms as he would a child, and carried her up on the dry sands. He wrapped about her the shawl which she had cast from her when she leaped into the water, and then held her, wet and shivering, close to his breast—so close that he could feel the frightened irregular beating of her heart.

"My brave girl!" he said, tenderly, drying the wet face with a corner of her shawl. "Do you know you have made me ashamed of myself? Do you know you have made me proud of you? And yet, you little Amazon, you had to turn to me in the end! Ah! that made me glad! You are conquered, subdued, now; you are a woman—a little trembling girl, a little tender child! I have tried to resist you; but each day you draw me irresistibly to you with your pretty unfettered ways, your innocent heart. You are sweet when you are cross, attractive when you are wild and ungovernable, grand when you are fearless and heroic; but now—now"—sinking his voice to a whisper—"you are divine!"

The girl shivered happily beneath the passionate words.

"You are cold," he said, hurriedly, folding her shawl more closely about her. "Come!"

They walked rapidly then, and in unbroken silence, to the old house among the trees. Rouan paced nervously back and forth on the broad piazza, while Mrs. Mowber flustered about, giving Nem a warm alcohol bath and dry soft clothing.

He waited impatiently until she was finally taken into the parlor; then he ran to the big cozy kitchen, like some eager school-boy, and mulled some wine, which he carried, steaming, to her.

She was lying on the wide old-fashioned lounge, which had been wheeled close to the fire-place. The only light in the room was that cast by the leaping flames; there was no one else in the whole house but Mrs. Mowber, and Rouan had left her washing dishes.

Nem was clad in a deep-red loose gown. She made him think of some sweet tired child, so quiet she lay, so lightly she seemed to breathe.

He went to her more timidly than he had ever before approached her. It needed only

one glance to make him wholly forget Helen Dudley; and, as he came near, she looked at him with eyes full of trust and tenderness.

"Drink this, Nem," he said, unsteadily, kneeling beside her.

He slipped his arm under her shoulders, and made her lean against his breast while he held the glass to her lips. Her luminous eyes sank, unable to meet his tender gaze.

"You are too—kind—to me," she faltered, very low, and one tear dropped from her eyelash to his hand. "It was—nothing—what I did. Who would see a child drown, when a little exertion would save it?"

She spoke slowly, and she uttered each word clearly and distinctly.

"If you were with me," said Rouan, putting away the empty glass and drawing her nearer to him, "you would always speak correctly, love. Why are you so careless, when, with but an instant's thought, you speak so sweetly?"

His voice was tender and his manner caressing, but she shrank from the words as from a blow. Her bosom swelled; she turned her face against him to hide the springing tears.

"Oh," she said, with one choking sob, "you hurt me! Oh, you hurt me so! You hurt my very soul!"

Even then, he had no remembrance of another woman who had spoken the same words to him—perhaps because he had been used all his life to hurting women, also because he was ensnared by an insane infatuation for this girl.

"How could I think?" she panted, passionately. "How could I be careful of my speech, when there was no one to care—no one to praise me—but a dozen to jeer at me for being proud?"

"Darling!" said Rouan, solemnly, forgetting everything but that a woman who loved him was grieving on his breast and that her tremulous lips were sweeter than wine, "I care! I will praise you! I will be proud of you! I am proud of you, my sweetheart, my darling—my wife!"

"Your wife?" whispered poor Nem, sobbing happily now and pressing closer to him, "Oh, heaven—oh, sweet heaven! What have I done to deserve such happiness?"

And then, all in a moment, with a sudden rush of bitterness that shook him like a leaf in a storm, Rouan remembered Helen Dudley.

CHAPTER VI.

"I'd like t' speak t' yees, 'f yees please."

Rouan started and threw away his cigar; something in Mrs. Mowber's stern old face gave him warning of what was to come. But could it be that Nem had been in such haste to tell her?

He had just finished breakfast, and was lounging on the piazza, smoking his first cigar. Nem had been invisible the whole morning, but Rouan was not disturbed thereby; indeed, he felt no particular desire to see her, now that with daylight and the cool sea-winds had come back the sweet influence of Helen Dudley.

All night, he had been wakeful. He had lain in the pale starlight, with wide-open eyes, listening to the rolling-in of the tide and all the soft myriad sounds of the night—the booming of a beetle, the murmuring of frogs, even the mournful cry of a coyote far up in the timbered hills.

He had weakly yielded to the fascination of the girl's beauty and her evident tenderness for him, and he had mistaken his feeling for the birth of a new love. It is a cold-blooded way of putting the fact, and he was too honorable to confess it; but away down in his heart, hidden beneath his restlessness like spring violets beneath the snow, lay the truth.

He turned to Mrs. Mowber with his habitual courtesy, but a ludicrous feeling stole over him when he remembered that his future mother-in-law was about to call him to account for the first time.

"I—h'm l'" said the old lady, clearing her throat; "I happind t' come t' th' parlor do'er las' night, 'n'—'n'—yees didn't hear me nur see me—'n'"

"Yes," said Rouan, reddening.

"'n' I couldn't help seein'—seein' yees a-makin' love t' Nem. Of course"—she fidgeted nervously with her toil-worn hands—"I can't think yees meant anything by 't, consid'rin' her antecedents 'n'—'n' blood; 'n' so I jist thought I'd tell yees thet the best thing yees can do is t' leave—right away, without sayin' any more t' 'er."

Rouan stood dumb. He was free! Free to step upon the steamer floating down by the wharf, and sail away over the blue sunset seas to the life he longed for, to the life he loved; to the gay fast men of his set, and the languid aristocratic women—the women with

low soft voices, well-bred manners, and delicate, refined faces.

Free! But at what a sacrifice! The sacrifice of a young girl's heart and his own honor! He could not accept his freedom upon those terms. He turned very pale.

"I have asked Nem to be my wife," he said.

A swift brightness swept over Mrs. Mowber's face.

"Yees hev?" she exclaimed, in a tone of relief. "Oh, I'm s' glad! I was that afraid thet yees didn't mean nothin'. I never thought fer a minute o' yees a-wantin' t' marry 'er. B't I'm glad o' fit: I am glad o' fit, sir; I know yees'll always be good t' 'er; 'n' though I don't want t' part with 'er, the Lord know, yet I wouldn't stand 'n' er way with a gentleman like yees. I never dreamt she'd git married, consid'rin' 'er blood 'n'—"

"What do you mean by that?" asked Rouan, sternly, struck by her significant tone.

"W'y"—and Mrs. Mowber looked at him in amazement—"didn't yees know? Didn't yees understand?"

"I understand nothing, except that she is your adopted daughter and my promised wife."

"W'y, then," said Mrs. Mowber, dropping her voice to a whisper and coming nearer, "yees ought t' know, seein' yees's a-goin' t' marry 'er: 'er mother, sir, was a half-breed Indyun, 'n'—"

She stopped, struck dumb by the look on his face; it was as if she had dealt him a blow. He essayed to speak, but no sound came between those white stern lips.

"La, sir, me!" ejaculated Mrs. Mowber, shrinking from him. "I didn't hev no idee yees'd feel thet bad 'bout 't, 'r I wouldn't 'a' told yees fer nothin'—not fer nothin', sir. She's thet white 'n' beautiful, sir, I s'posed yees didn't care 'bout the little taint 'n' er blood. Nem don't know nothin' 'bout 't, neither; 'er mother 'n' father died when she was a baby, 'n' I've hed 'er ever sense; 'n' there don't nawbody 'bout here know 't."

Still, Rouan was unable to speak.

"Don't look thet way, sir," said Mrs. Mowber, her voice trembling a little. "'t makes yees look jist like m' poor son afore he went daft."

Then Rouan burst into unnatural laughter.

"I do hope I am not going daft," he said, finding his voice at last. "But, Mrs. Mowber, this is terrible! Is there no way—"

He paused. A look of blank disappointment came over Mrs. Mowber's face. She clasped her old rough hands tightly together, to still their trembling; her good kind face seemed to have suddenly aged.

"Ther's only one way," she said, mournfully. "I know what yeas was a-goin' t' say; 'n' ther's only one way, sir—'n' that one 'll break 'er heart!"

She pointed one thin finger toward the steamer lying at the wharf. Rouan shivered, as his eyes followed hers. One moment, he looked irresolute; then he shook his head slowly.

"I cannot do it," he said, brokenly. "It would be cowardly—dastardly—brutal! And yet—oh, I must be alone for a while, Mrs. Mowber; I will talk with you when I have arrived at a decision."

As he turned away, he noticed a fine lace kerchief lying at his feet. He picked it up and gave it to Mrs. Mowber:

"t b'longs t' the lady what come las' night on the boat," she said, folding it neatly. "The loveliest lady, sir, b't pale 'n' sad-lookin'. She said she would not be a bit o' trouble; all she wantid was t' lay under these green trees 'n' rest. She's been awful sick, 'n' somebody recommended this place. She must 'a' lost this las' night."

Rouan hurried to his room, and there paced back and forth for hours, trying to accept the inevitable result of his own folly.

"How could I have been such a fool?" he said, for the dozenth time. "To imagine that by making love to one woman I could forget another! I—who have always been so cool! It was bad enough last night, God knows—but now! Oh, if I must marry her, how I wish Mrs. Mowber had not told me!"

He went to the window; but the sunlit sea, breaking into ripples before his eyes, annoyed him. He walked back to his writing-table; but the fresh bunch of flowers upon it sent a pang of remorse through his heart. He threw himself upon his bed; but the sweet scent of lavender came to his nostrils, and Nem's tender happy eyes looked out of each shadow: the soft wind sifting through the vines outside his window sounded like the rustle of her dress.

At luncheon, he scarcely glanced toward her, and spoke seldom—hating himself for his cruelty, yet too weak to overcome it.

When she turned aside a little, he looked at her, and, young and beautiful though she was, shuddered, thinking of the blood that pulsed through her veins.

For Rouan was a thorough aristocrat, and the mere thought of taking this girl home to his haughty people was bitter as death. Yet there was no honorable way of escape—he was sure of that. He had argued the question in his mind until his brain had become dull in consequence, and he yielded to a listless apathy.

So the day wore slowly away, and evening came on. In summer, on Puget Sound, one can read fine print by daylight at ten o'clock at night—such a long pale glow does the sun leave behind it when it finally sinks into the Pacific Ocean.

It was only eight when Rouan, bored to death with thinking, slipped out to his hammock. It was already dim twilight under those drooping branches.

He threw himself into the hammock, and lay motionless, his hands clasped under his head, his eyes closed, one foot resting on the ground.

Softly, timidly, Nem presently came stealing to him; he opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Well, Nem," he said, kindly.

"I thought," she faltered, "you had—seemed lonely to-day—or—or troubled, 'n' that"—falling back into her homely speech—"yeas might like me t' talk t' yeas; do yeas?"

"Yes, certainly," he replied, feeling sorry for her.

Nem drew a low chair beside the hammock, looking at him with wistful questioning eyes. Rouan reached out languidly and laid his hand on hers.

He felt the girl tremble, and again he called himself a brute for having selfishly trifled with her love.

"Now that you are here," he said, speaking lightly with an effort, "what are you going to say to me? Something cheerful, I hope."

"It's nothin' that yuh will care t' hear, I'm afraid," said the girl, bitterly. "Only—only—I'm s' happy, I don' want t' go t' bed; I can't sleep fer thinkin' 'bout 't. Las' night"

—her voice fell to a whisper—"I never closed my eyes onc't—not onc't! I just lay 'n' thought 'n' thought 'ntil the sun came tremblin' right into my room."

"I did not sleep, either," said Rouan, with fine irony. Then, checking the girl's exclamation of surprised delight, he added brutally: "Why is it, Nem, that almost in the same breath you say 'yees' and 'yuh'? If you must speak improperly—"

He stopped; Nem had shrunk away from him, and was trying to withdraw her hand. In the semi-darkness, he saw that her lips were quivering and her eyes full of tears. Ashamed, he drew her toward him.

"Nem," he said, slowly, kissing her hair to soften his words, "if you love me—if you"—wincing—"marry me, I am afraid I shall make you suffer. I am fairly brutal sometimes, am I not? There was really no reason why I should have said that to you, child, and yet it was a keen pleasure to me to say it—to hurt you. Do you think, Nem, that you can be happy with me, after all? Now is the time to think well before you decide."

His heart beat fast as he awaited her reply; everything depended upon it. If she gave him but the smallest loop-hole! If she—

The girl lifted her head from his breast; her tender wet eyes shone into his; her hands shook a moment in his clasp, then gently released themselves and sought his neck, clasping themselves there as though they would never unloose.

Rouan's heart sank like lead, even before she spoke.

"Don't! Don't!" she said, passionately. "I would die without yuh—you, I mean—now that I know what 't is t' be loved by yee—you! Oh, I will be s' careful, 'n' try t' speak as you wish—if only yuh will be patient till I learn—"

She broke off, sobbing. Rouan was moved, in spite of his disappointment.

"You must not mind my impatience," he said, gently, kissing away her tears. "I am a bear, as I told you, dear, and you must make the best of a bad bargain. Nem, how well do you love me?"

She hesitated a little, moving her head restlessly from side to side.

"I love yuh so well," she said at last, in a tone of intense feeling, yet very low, "that I wonder sometimes how I ever lived eighteen years without yuh—you. I love you better

'n' the sea out yonder loves the sunlight—better 'n' the sea-gulls loves the sea. I love yuh so well"—she said, solemnly—"that I think it would kill me if—'f anything should take you away. I ust t' always wish that I'd be drowned while I was young. I thought I'd like t' lie down under those blue clear waves, tangled into the green sea-weed 'n' the pink shells. But now"—she shivered and pressed closer to him—"oh, I don't want t' die now! Oh, I don't want t' die! I should be thinkin' all the time, after I was dead, that you was lovin' someone else—holdin' 'er in your arms, like this—kissin' 'er—"

"Like this!" said Rouan, carried away by her earnestness.

"'n' f I knew it," said the girl, yielding to the sweet interruption, "do yuh think I could rest, wherever I was, knowin' it? An' I would know 't! Oh, I would!"

"Nem! Nem!" Mrs. Mowber's shrill high-pitched voice came ringing across the lawn.

"I must go," said Nem, reluctantly. "There's a new boarder now, 'n' there's so much more to be done. I never get tired, though, now—there's always you t' think of."

"Nem," said Rouan, with a sudden good impulse, "I shall be as kind to you as I can possibly be. I have my faults, and God knows they are bad ones; but you must bear with me, dear, always; I will do my best to deserve you. I can do no more."

She leaned against him for a moment, then ran away through the wet grass.

All his life, Rouan was glad that he said those words; afterward, he never again found it in his heart to say them.

When she was gone, he lay there swinging slowly, touching his foot to the ground each time the hammock swung forward.

"I feel as if I were some other man," he said, bitterly. "I am so changed that I do not recognize myself, because I was fool enough to fall in love with a woman I had never seen! Yes, in love! For it was a feeling so deep that it required only her glance, her voice, to make it leap forth into adoration. Not satisfied with being unhappy, I must needs make myself wretched. My work neglected, my brain numbed, my hands idle, I lie here swinging in a hammock, like some sentimental school-girl! I wonder if

such things happen to a man more than once in an ordinary lifetime?"

It was ten o'clock when at last he flung himself out from under the shadows of the apple-tree and strode to the house. As he passed the open window of the "livin'-room," he observed that a fire was burning upon the hearth, and he stepped through and approached its warmth, feeling wet and chilled by the night dews.

The lounge was wheeled to the hearth, and someone was lying on it—a woman, with a shawl thrown about her and a white kerchief over her face.

"The pale lady with the sad face," Rouan thought, with a feeling of contempt, as he seated himself near her. "How I hate delicate women who are always fancying they are ill! I believe I would hate an angel, though, to-night. I suppose this woman will come down late to breakfast, and take her other meals in her own rooms—one thing, at least, for which to be grateful."

The lady stirred, and one hand and arm fell over the side of the lounge. The fire-light leaped into a magnificent diamond on her finger, and a thousand tinted rays flashed before his eyes.

It was a beautiful hand—soft, white, finely formed, with narrow pink nails; and the arm, bare to the elbow, was so perfect that Rouan could not withdraw his eyes. Suddenly it burst upon him that it was a familiar arm—one that he had seen, touched, kissed.

He started up with an exclamation. The lady drew the kerchief from her face and raised herself upon her elbow; her startled sleep-filled eyes met his; her lips parted—pale, trembling, though she did not speak.

"Is it you?" exclaimed Rouan, harshly, nervously. "You—Helen Dudley?"

Her lips parted again, but one word only escaped them:

"You!"

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

HOW BESSIE CAME HOME.: CHAPTER I.

BY HETTY HOLYOKE.

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HOW BESSIE CAME HOME.

BY HETTY HOLYOKE.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Stanwood was a broken merchant; prosperous and influential once, but now forgotten upon Change. His wife was a confirmed invalid; and Ollie, the third and last member of his small family, was an elderly woman who had served them in better days, and now acting as cook, chambermaid, nurse, and financier at once, had but one aim in life, to prop the falling glory of the Stanwoods.

Yes, there were others who belonged to the family, but up to the time of our narrative had taken little part in its discouragements and sorrows. Alas, it had no joys! Mrs. Stanwood remained in her darkened room week after week; Mr. Stanwood sat below, in his easy-chair with the torn damask cover, and read books of romance and poetry week after week; and week after week in the kitchen, poor old Ollie toiled like a giantess to produce for them a suitable degree of comfort with the scanty means at her command. Hope, faith, and with them cheerfulness, had forsaken the household when its wealth, and luxury, and troops of friends departed.

Let to-day be no worse than yesterday, was the only prayer of these discouraged souls; they never thought of improving matters, and making to-day better than yesterday. Change, they dreaded, and trembled before the very sound; for in their memory it was wholly associated with loss.

But a change was impending: Mr. Stanwood thought of it among his books, and Mrs. Stanwood, among her pillows, and Ollie among her accounts; all shrank from mentioning what they felt sure would bring new trial and sorrow; yet the matter must be discussed, and one morning Mr. Stanwood summoning his energies, entered his wife's room firmly resolved to break the disagreeable subject.

Groping his way through the dark, close room, he began with his usual inquiry, "How do you feel this morning, my dear? Any more comfortable?"

"Oh, no," in a feeble voice, "I have had a little less neuralgia, but I am so weak and ache so with lying here. I thought no one would ever come, it is half an hour past the time for taking my drops." And she whined through a long list

of aches and fears and wishes, while Mr. Stanwood, seeking vainly for the phial which contained his wife's potion, began opening a window shutter, and cheerily streamed in the morning sun.

"My dear husband, are you crazy? you blind me, with this raging headache too! pray, pray, shut out that dreadful light."

"Then I cannot find your drops."

"Well, let them go; oh, dear! I am not sure they do me any good. Did Ollie speak to you of my breakfast?"

"She did not, what will you have?"

"Not much of anything. I have no appetite; ask her to cook up something that I will relish, and to be sure my coffee is strong, and to have it rich with cream, and ask her if she has not some calf's-foot-jelly; that may possibly cool my mouth. That's all, except a biscuit or a piece of toast, she can bring both, and I will eat whichever looks most tempting: it is a dreadful thing not to have any appetite."

"So it is, love; but I am glad you are not hungry now, because—probably you remember what day this is?"

"How should I? all the days are alike to us." Yet Mrs. Stanwood remembered very well.

"It is the first of April, and Bessie is coming home to live; she left us for boarding-school, you know, some time before our reverse of fortune, and must remember her home as it once was; the change will be a disappointment to the poor young thing." And Mr. Stanwood's voice trembled. Many a time his heart yearned for the absent child who was suffering banishment on account of her mother's nerves; and now he feared that the unattractive home would estrange her from him even more than absence had done.

"Well, Charles, what do you expect of me?" asked Mrs. Stanwood, in an injured tone. "Let her come, we have done our best, I have sold my jewelry to pay the last school bills, what can she ask more?"

"Of course I expect nothing, but——"

"Then please go and see about my breakfast; ah! suffering is hard enough without neglect."

"But do you not think we might have a fire in the parlor, and have the piano tuned; and that

you could feel well enough to be down stairs when Bessie arrives and welcome her?"

"I, in that cold room, not heated before this winter!" Mrs. Stanwood gained her voice from very indignation. "No, Charles, we cannot afford so many fires; and as for the piano, I broke it purposely, there is no need of establishing dangerous precedents in the beginning; and to hear piano music with my poor nerves would be distressing. Bessie may as well understand at once that she must yield a few of her own wishes to others' necessities."

Mr. Stanwood did not often work himself into sufficient courage for maintaining any point, and knowing his own weakness, resolved to make the most of the present opportunity. "You are aware, my love, that Bessie has lived in utter estrangement from us; that she has been deprived of those sweet home influences, and all those manifestations of parental love which make the charm of childhood. You have not felt able to correspond with her, and it is hard for a man to write letters which interest a child, and hard for a child to maintain much interest in strangers; truly, I cannot see that we have the smallest claim upon the poor girl's love."

"We have claims upon her duty: often during her infancy and childhood, I have comforted myself with the thought that she would grow up to repay all my anxiety and care; and some time I might lean upon her, as she leaned upon me then: the time has come."

Completely vanquished, Mr. Stanwood went back to his easy-chair just in time to meet Ollie with her breakfast waiter, which for the first time, seemed to him somewhat crowded for an invalid's fare; and opening his book, he wondered if Bessie must content herself with such unsavory meals as his own invariably were; and if she would be very much dismayed at first sight of her home; and if she could possibly love him, and care for him, and comfort his old age

CHAPTER II.

"WHERE are they? Where's somebody? Mother! Ollie! Where's the parlor? Can this be the house?"

"Bessie! dear child! the same bright curls and ringing voice that made our home bright when you were a child."

"Then you are my father, I thought so! and I am home, and you are glad to see me? But where's mother? And why did you not come to the cars?"

"I hardly thought of it; forgive me, we are not used to arrivals. Your mother is up stairs, sick."

"Sick! and you did not send for me?"

"She is always sick my child, you will have plenty of nursing."

"Oh! may I take care of her? I was afraid the house would be full of servants, and that I must sit up primly and be a lady. Shall I go up stairs now? Yes—do not wait to ask—I will surprise her." And she flew to her mother's room.

"Dear, dear, blessed mother, my own mother, I'm so glad to get back to you!" and every word was sealed with twenty kisses.

Mrs. Stanwood sneezed. "How do you do, Bessie? I'm glad you have come, we need you enough—there that will do," she sneezed again. "Stand farther off, love, you must learn to be considerate; I am an invalid, you know, and your cold damp garments might give me my death."

"Dear mother, it is the sunniest April day you ever knew, and I waited long enough below, talking with papa, to drive all the chills away, I should think; but you are sensitive, poor thing. Do let me open the shutter and see how you look."

Equally curious to mark what changes time had made in her child's appearance, Mrs. Stanwood nerved herself to bear the intolerable light, and Bessie prattled on.

"Why you're a perfect beauty! What a shame to be shut up in this dark room all the time. No, I shall not wholly close the shutter; for one does not gain a mother every day, and I want to realize your existence, as I can only do by having you before my eyes. What a nice, kind gentleman father is, but I did not expect to find him so old: perhaps he worries about you; how long have you been sick, mother?"

"For more than seven years."

"And this is why everything looks so dimly down stairs; such funny, old, faded furniture and carpets, and such dusty curtains and ragged chairs you never saw, or dreamed of except in a novel; the elegant, great rooms make these things look more comfortless: I will soon bring about a change."

"My poor child, your father is a bankrupt, our property, our friends, our hope, our happiness all went together. I do not complain; and you must learn, like your father and myself, to submit to the dispensations of Providence."

"You surprise me; but if we are so poor, how does it happen that we still live in so fine a house?"

"Your father's failure was the result of no mismanagement or speculation, but of losses at sea; and his creditors were so pleased with the honorable manner in which he yielded every

thing to their demands, that they presented me with the house in which we lived. I hope to remain here until a release comes from my suffering."

"Then you expect better things?"

"Yes, Bessie, I expect to die."

"Oh, mother, not yet! not for years and years! Wait and see what I can do with our home, see how, before long, I will have everything fresh and bright; and how completely I will cure you, and have your beautiful face for the best ornament in my parlor. My parlor, my home, mother, father—you cannot guess what blessed words they are to me, how I have longed to say them, and have envied the poorest beggar that spoke of parents and a home."

"We must talk about these plans of yours, Bessie; I hate change, so does your father; if you spoil aught there are no means of replacing it, so do not attempt any experiments yet. Pour out my drops now, love; and give me that tart to remove the taste from my mouth; there, close the shutter, hang up the green shawl against the crevice; then go down stairs, and I will try to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

"Why, Ollie, you dear soul! I had almost forgotten you. Here, don't wait to wipe your hands, let me give you a kiss, as I used when you put me to bed years ago. You have grown old, Ollie."

"Well I might, Miss, with all the care, and trouble, and sickness, and poverty, and—"

"I would not talk about such things, you will grow young again, now I have come home to make everything go smoothly and look bright. How do I look, Ollie? Are you disappointed in me! And do you suppose mother was? for she didn't seem so very, very glad as I thought perhaps she would be; though she was kind, and said something about being pleased upon my return."

"You have not changed, Miss Bessie, in one thing; you always did rattle off a string of questions, and give no one a chance to reply. How do you look? like an angel, in this poor, old, faded room."

"Do not slander my home, Ollie, or I shall have to change domestics; though I dare say you have been toiling for about nothing ever since my father failed. Tell me now exactly how you manage, and how poor we really are."

"It would break your heart, Miss Bessie, I'd rather not."

"You do not know what a stout, little heart I

have, so speak the worst. What do you think, Ollie! some mischievous boy has nailed a dress-maker's sign upon our side door. I noticed it as we drove up, this afternoon."

"The very same eyes! when she was a child nobody could deceive her!" Ollie exclaimed. "If you must know then, we are obliged to let out a few rooms to some respectable women, who, who—"

"Are dressmakers? How convenient that will be, I shall know all the fashions!"

"But we don't speak of it, Miss Bessie, especially to your mother; where their bell-wire runs through our entry, I have had it enclosed in a thick box, and she never catches the sound. It would kill her, I believe, to know that a Stanley and a Stanwood were living under the same roof with seamstresses, and that our house was constantly frequented by their customers."

"Why, then, have you allowed the thing to happen?"

"The rooms were not used; and these women pay a large rent, which is our only steady income. Sometimes your grandfather or your uncle send a few hundred dollars; but we never know when to expect it, and your mother would die before asking a single cent. It is a pleasant thing, Miss, to have ready money; patience knows I had difficult work enough when we wanted it."

"Then you manage all the finances, Ollie?"

Ollie's brow clouded. "Why, yes; they said I could make the money go farther than any one else, but of course, Miss Bessie—"

"Of course, Miss Bessie will not meddle with your plans, dear old Ollie, except when you are willing to sacrifice them for the sake of helping her now and then."

Since the day of the failure, Ollie had not smiled so radiantly before. "That will I indeed, Miss; and heaven knows all my plans and all my humble walks have but one end, to comfort my old master and mistress in the days of their humiliation. As for money, I see you are not the flighty girl that we expected home, with a head full of boarding-school airs, so here's the purse, Miss Bessie, and here am I at your service."

"Very well; now you have passed through the form of resignation, I re-elect you manager of finance. We will trust each other, and be partners, Ollie; for we both have one aim, and though I have given no proof as yet of my capacity, wait awhile patiently and see what I can do. But tell me, are you going to carry up that old tin tea-pot for our supper? Have we not a better one?"

"Why, yes, there is a Britannia and a china tea service, but your father always tells me to do what makes least work, and he has grown used to these."

"Let us try the others to-night. Come, it is only fair that you should treat to something upon my return; and I would rather have a good-looking table than a good meal any time."

"I am sorry to hear that, Miss; for I had contrived a treat for you, look at this beautiful little steak, so relishing after your journey."

"How thoughtful in you, Ollie; and you will let us have the tea service besides? See, I have washed off the dust, and it looks like another kind of ware. You are so indulgent that I shall take care not to add to your labors; bring a tub of water to the dining-room after tea, and I will wash the cups to begin."

CHAPTER IV.

On taking her tea to the dining-room, by whose fire she had usually left it standing until the table was laid, Ollie was surprised to find the latter in readiness, and a little dismayed withal at some other of Bessie's improvements. The fire was blazing at a height which Mr. Stanwood never required, and Ollie never allowed; the ragged easy-chair was overspread with a table-cloth, one of the few bright things remaining in the house, and which Ollie had cherished like the apple of her eye; and worse still, on the stand burnt two wax candles, which as relics of former elegance, Ollie had preserved in the parlor candelabra year after year; scraping the dust from them every spring and fall, until it must be confessed their appearance was rather attenuated.

The good woman began to expostulate; but Bessie made her stand at the door and confess the whole aspect of the room was magically changed, and that it did one's heart good to see things begin to look gay again; and that in case her mother ever should resolve to come down stairs, it would be fine to have a pleasant room for her. Ollie was in a yielding mood, and Bessie coaxed so prettily, and looked so fairy-like and charming with her shower of golden curls; and the whole was such a change besides, from the dreary, old monotony, she had not the heart to frown; though Mr. Stanwood might have spent all his evenings in the dark, before the housekeeper would have yielded her precious candles to him.

After tea came another expostulation about the dishes, but Bessie had her way; and soon it became an established custom in the house that

Bessie's way should be had in all things, though she was assiduously the most yielding of mortals and asked everything as a favor, nothing as right. She had a fascinating manner which no one understood, and no one could resist.

Ollie's quick eye detected the remains of the "beautiful little steak" she had cooked so carefully, upon Mr. Stanwood's plate; she felt hurt and slighted, so she told Bessie the first time they were alone again, to think she had no eaten what was prepared exclusively for herself.

"But there was not enough for two, and I feasted upon the savory odors and upon your kindness, Ollie; while my father, as he finished the morsel of meat, smacked his lips in a way that did me good. I am afraid poor pa does not often have such a supper."

"Then let him work and earn it, I say. He is a good man, Mr. Stanwood is; and I don't forget that he is your father, Miss Bessie; but he has not the energy of a mouse; sitting around here, in the prime of life, to be waited upon and fed by women!"

"Hush, Ollie."

"No, I will not hush until I've said my say: I want you to understand him; I did not for a good while, and things never went so well as since I have found him out; he is discouraged, and that makes him indolent; he is fond of books, and that makes him contented, and keeps him always in a kind of maze: why, I have known him to go into a long explanation to your mother about the chemical difference—I believe he called it, between steel and iron, when she was half dying with neuralgia and nervousness. He is always in a brown study, eats and drinks, and sleeps and wakes in it; he could not tell you this minute what he had for supper."

"I declare, I will ask him!"

"You may; and tell him if you choose, that never a finer gentleman than he was once, could change to such a dead-and-alive image as he is now." Ollie felt secure enough that the message would never be given.

CHAPTER V.

AWAY ran Bessie to the dining-room, and entered just in time to arrest her father's hand as he was removing the fine cloth from his chair. "That is to remain, papa, until I can procure a better covering."

"But Ollie will take our heads off."

"I shall appeal to higher authority; you are master of the house."

"We don't know about that, Bessie," opening his book.

"Why don't we know, papa? Whose comfort should be consulted if not yours? I expected a compliment or two about the appearance of my room, and so far, I have had only expostulations."

"To tell the truth, I did not observe the change at first, but as I sat alone here by the fire, where I have sat alone so many nights, it seemed to come over me all at once; and I looked around and saw what my bright-haired little witch had been doing. Why, Bessie, it is like a chapter of the Arabian Nights."

"No, father, say it is like a chapter of home, that is what I longed to hear you say of your own accord. Home to my thinking is far better than any diamond cave or enchanted castle; home, where there are ready sympathies, and loving words, and where there is always a bright, warm, cheery look, and a sense of security and peace."

"All this I felt and might have said dear, but in fact, I have learned to dwell more upon enchanted castles, than upon such a home as you describe; they are alike unattainable for us."

"And do you think I intend living upon your small means, papa, and doing nothing toward adding to your happiness? I am selfish enough to be glad of our poverty on my own account; for now I may be of some use in my home, be a nurse and companion for dear mamma, and oh, if I could win you both to love me as I love you now!"

"Then you really love us, and are not disappointed in your home, and are content to comfort us in our old age!"

"How could I but be fond of you, and think of the home I knew so little about, in all those dreary years I have been away? When the other girls went home at vacation, do you suppose my heart did not come to you and plead for a little love? When I visited with my school-mates, and saw them petted and encouraged, do you suppose I never thought of those who would be as glad to pet and encourage me? Oh, father, you do not know the long nights I have lain awake thinking about you all, and wondering how it looked, and how all was going on here at home; and then I have cried until morning, thinking, perhaps, you might become estranged from me; and when I returned, I should be an unwelcome intruder after all, and should wish myself back again, or in my grave."

"My good, tender child! We do not deserve such affection, yet your mother and I have done our best for you; one by one she has sold her jewels to defray your school expenses; and for the

rest, we wished as long as possible to keep you ignorant of the deplorable state of our affairs."

"Why so deplorable? Here are you in the prime of life, and I am young and full of energy and fond of work."

"Suppose you learn the dressmaker's trade, you, a Stanwood!" said the father, with some bitterness; as for myself, I am past work; I cannot accept dishonorable labor, and the honorable is beyond my reach."

"It is the purpose for which we work, that makes our labor a glory or disgrace; and if I could soothe my mother's pain, or add to my father's comfort thereby, I would become a dressmaker to-morrow. What is the use of aristocratic birth unless it make us independent? At school, I used to say to myself, 'I can do this, and this, because I am a Stanley and a Stanwood, and as people know we possess the soul of honor and aristocracy, they will not dare demur,' and they did not."

"Only this morning an old acquaintance offered me a clerkship, with a salary of five hundred dollars; I resented it as an insult. Would you have me disgrace my wife and child, Bessie?"

"But is it more disgraceful to earn ever so small a pittance in ever so humble a way, than to live upon the earnings of a poor old woman, and the charity of relatives, and perhaps even to borrow money which there is no hope of repaying?"

"Yes, I have done all that; and now there is no retracing the past, there is no hope for the future, and you would add drudgery and disgrace to my other trials," moaned the father, weaker and childish with that imbecile will, than the slight young thing who nestled beside Ollie and sought to inspire him with her own brave energy. There she nestled and argued till long after Ollie's slim candles had flickered and gone out, and the last crumbling brand had rolled down on the hearth. And the weak will yielded to the stronger one, and Bessie had her way. Mr. Stanwood promised as soon as the morrow should dawn, to solicit the clerkship which he had once so indignantly refused.

Then Bessie, tired with the change and travel and excitement of the day, crept to her bed in a great lonely, cheerless, room, and lay there planning what more she could do to change the aspect of her home; and then she thought, poor child, of other homes, and other returns which she had witnessed, when a whole house, wild with joy, had flown to meet the wanderers, and parents had lingered over their children with blessings and grateful tears.

"But this is nothing to me, and I will not

think of it; the greater the want in my home, the greater my field of work. And why am I weeping like a fretful child?" mused our brave Bessie, and turning impatiently upon her pillow, put away the wet curls from her face as if resolved thus to put away all grief, and resolutely turn from all thought of herself.

"The girl is pretty and well disposed; somewhat too vivacious perhaps, and she has not my delicate sensibility, or the change in our home would have shocked her more," mused Mrs. Stanwood, as she fell asleep that night, "but I foresee how my poor nerves must suffer from that shocking flow of spirits. Ah! this life is but a vale of tears; well for us who believe in the promise of a better life beyond."

"It is a dangerous precedent, yielding thus at the commencement," mused Mr. Stanwood, "but the child is so gentle and loving, it is such a sweet flower to wither in our dull home, it is such a sweet flower to nestle in my lonely heart, that I must give it shelter if I can. Poor thing, it is well our Bessie does not know from experience, what a home should be, or she would feel more keenly what her own home is."

"Poor thing," mused Ollie, after she had said her prayers that night, "so young and cheerful, and careless now, and such a life before her: all work and no play, all vexation and no thanks. Toil, toil, as Mr. Stanwood said once, to keep the burden of poverty from rolling back and crushing us; like trying to roll a great stone up hill all the time and never getting a step ahead; we can bear it, but it is cruel for her." Tears fell upon Ollie's cheek, as the old woman lay in her wretched little room, and up in God's calm heaven the Angel of Pity recorded there, where they shall shine when earthly crowns and sceptres all have crumbled back to dust; where the pomp of caste and wealth, and the glory of conquerors shall be alike forgotten.

CHAPTER VI.

Bessie's first day at home was more of a "precedent," to use his own word, than her father dreamed: the little girl went on with her improvements, and everything became transformed. Every one demurred from Bessie's plans, every one prophesied failure and expostulated earnestly, and she always seemed to yield and always had her way.

Carpets were turned and made to look like new; curtains were taken down and ripped and cleansed, and patched, and pressed, and hung again in almost pristine splendor; neat patch coverings concealed the shabby richness of the

damask chairs and sofas; the dimmed and smoky marble of the fire-place was oiled and polished till the long lost veins and devices came to light again; the tarnished mirror-frame was concealed in a cloud of delicate gauze, which had floated about Mrs. Stanwood once, in her party days and which Bessie found in the garret. Dingy oil paintings were removed and their frames filled with some fine engravings that had lain for years in a port-folio on the library floor: elegantly bound books were brought from the same source; little airy tables, ornaments, and divers other things which had long been packed away as troublesome and useless, came forth at the call of our fairy's divining wand: blinds that had been shut for years were opened, and their cob webs dusted away, and windows washed; and Bessie declared that the very sunshine had a look of gratified curiosity as it streamed into her room.

Meantime a change equally startling had been wrought in the chamber above: Mrs. Stanwood plead, and sighed, and wept, and reproached, and lost her voice, and gained it again to command and threaten; but it did no good—though the most dutiful child, the most charming companion, the most tender friend, the gentlest nurse, and the most submissive of mortals where her own rights were concerned, Bessie would have her way. Treating her mother like a spoiled child, for she soon found arguments of no avail, the daughter diverted, amused, encouraged, praised, and petted, and coaxed her into concession after concession, until Mrs. Stanwood learned to endure both light and air, to gain more strength by using the little she had, to lose her voice less frequently, because Bessie loved to hear it, it was such a musical voice! To eat less of pastry and sweetmeats, and satisfy her poor appetite with simpler and more moderate rations. At length the invalid could even listen to a book; and her nerves bore this so well, that of her own accord she offered Bessie the piano key, when a new world of happiness opened to both, for the girl played enchantingly.

Good old Ollie placed both hands in those of the new mistress, and submitted to be led whithersoever she would. Never, she verily believed, were there such persuasive lips, never was there such an unselfish life, and never were such difficult labors so light-heartedly performed, as those of the little fairy who danced about the house with her golden curls, and transformed every nook into which her influence fell.

Of course Ollie had her seasons of doubt, and Mrs. Stanwood whole weeks of despondency and

CHAPTER VII.

relapse, and the father looked wistfully at his books sometimes, and talked about Stanwood pride, and dangerous precedents, and hinted that not many girls would drive a poor, old father out into the cold world which had slighted him to delve for her: but Bessie, feeling sure that she was right, worked on till the doubts were dispelled, the hopefulness cheered, and the unjust reproaches withdrawn, and atoned for by penitence and praise.

Happiness comes like grief, all at once: and one morning it seemed as if Bessie's cup were suddenly destined to overflow: her father entered as she was performing some household duty in the dining-room, her parlor; and with a boy's enthusiasm, and all the pride of all the Stanwoods in his air, presented her with a bank note for seventy-five dollars, his first earnings, and "There, child, I did not know how light labor would become after I had a purpose; nor what dignity lies in the humblest employment, until you had taught me the difference between false and genuine pride. Bless you, sweet fairy, you have done more for the old father's selfish heart than for his once dull home!"

And then there came a slow step through the hall; and Bessie thought amid her work how Ollie was growing feeble with age, and could not long sustain her present labors; when the door opened and not Ollie, but Mrs. Stanwood presented herself, and though trembling with the unwonted exertion, paused before sinking into a chair to look with wonder and delight about the room.

"It never seemed more elegant, more clean and fresh in our palmiest days," she exclaimed, with childish pleasure; "why, my blossom! fragrance and sunshine follow you everywhere, I believe."

"They exist everywhere, dear mother, we have only to remove the shutters, and cobwebs, and dirt which conceal them; that is what I been striving to do. Come, rest on this lounge, it was covered purposely for your use; wait, let me arrange the pillows, and here is a shawl for your feet. Now you look like a beauty, and make the crowning charm to my room: isn't it bright and comfortable? You see poverty is not such a terrible grief, after all."

"There is no poverty with a home and such a child!" and this reply proved such a change from her previous ways of thinking, that it startled the husband as much as if the sun, rising some day, should shed forth darkness instead of light into the world. But instead of darkness, the invalid was beginning now to shed forth light.

Mrs. STANWOOD made important discoveries, and found much food for reflection in her brief visit to the parlor. In the excitement of the moment, Mr. Stanwood told of his vanquished pride and indolence; of his new purpose in life, and his small but honest gains; and Ollie, in her enthusiasm, told how Miss Bessie went every day to read heathenish Greek and Latin, and dull books of theology, to the blind, old clergyman who lived opposite; and how the money which she received for this service had all been spent in additions to the comfort of her home. And the dressmaker's bell ringing loudly more than once, Bessie praised the thrift of their old housekeeper in procuring tenants for useless rooms.

Mrs. Stanwood made no comments during these disclosures. Once or twice she wiped a tear from her face, then returned quietly to her room, where she suffered a long relapse, and no one but herself knew that this time the disease was in her soul; that while she lay so quiet, heart and mind were racked with dreadful strife, as looking back through all the past, and on toward the future, she saw her own conduct and her duties in their true light, unobscured by selfishness. The wife felt reproached for having left her husband to struggle through his sorrows alone: the mother was abashed before the example of her child. She had suffered, true, but she had courted suffering as a hope of release from wearisome existence; and as an excuse for opportunities neglected, and duties unfulfilled.

And from that sickness she came forth renewed: with faults and weaknesses still, but with an humble, penitent heart, resolved, if possible, to make the future atone for all the past.

Her thoughts went back now to another child; a son who had wandered years ago from home, and over whose fate she had wondered and wept for weary years: no tidings came, and she tried to believe him dead, but doubts still haunted her, and now the family fortunes were brightening, she told Bessie that only one wish was left ungratified: could she but see Harry again, or even have certain tidings of his death!

"He is an ungrateful fellow, and you have worried enough about him, my love," said Mr. Stanwood.

"Poor fellow, wandering about the world without any home! But he will be sure to come back to us, mamma; only have patience," said Bessie.

Bessie never said wrong; and therefore Harry came; whether because great destiny as well as

its subjects submitted to her dictation, or because a calm, wise mind and true womanly instincts inspired her predictions, no one ever could tell. Bessie predicted, and Harry, like everything else in the world, stepped forth at the nod of those golden curls. But of this in another chapter.

One day Bessie fell in love with a pretty cottage, which nestled amidst shrubs and vines in a suburb of the good city of Boston. A card in the window whispered temptingly, "To let!" and all the way home she thought how her mother would enjoy the change to country life, and how cosily they all might live here, and what a grand stroke of policy it would be to rent the whole of the great, expensive house, and remove to this newer, cheaper, and more comfortable one.

"Never, never!" said Mr. Stanwood, "the scene of my former prosperity, the house my father gave me first, and in which I will die. It is too far from my office," said Mr. Stanwood; said Ollie, "Unless we are here to watch it, they will burn our house, or, or—" Bessie listened to all the ors and had her way.

She was in her element now: she could furnish the whole house, and warm and keep it open. She flew about like a humming-bird among flowers, and everywhere left some evidence of her taste and industry. She trained her vines and watered her flowers, swept, dusted, sewed and sang from morning till night, as if there were no such word as weariness. Strangers stopped as they passed by, to ask whose home this little Eden could be so near the city, and yet such a contrast to its cumbersome brick and stone.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN one of those stone streets, at the doorway of a fashionable hotel, stood Harry Stanwood, one bright morning in June, twirling his glove, and yawning listlessly.

He was handsome and manly to look upon, with all the pride and dignity of the Stanwoods, and all the frankness, ease and grace of the Stanleys in his bearing; but a cold sneer disfigured his mouth as he muttered,

"Home, yes, and nothing changed; trust luck for that! Cold, proud, empty, dark, old house; damp rooms, chilly reception, reproaches, no fire, no food, no sympathy, no love, no anything but repining, and despair, and selfishness. Mother sick up stairs, father dawdling over his books, Ollie toothless and severe, Bess, the bright-haired little blessing that she was! changed to a pert Miss fresh from boarding-

school. But duty is duty, and home I must go; I shall feel all the easier for it after they are dead."

Striding through the familiar streets hurriedly, half afraid that his resolution would evaporate, Harry reached the tall, dark door of the frowning house; and rang its bell softly, not forgetful of his mother's nerves.

"No, sir: Wilson; you can read it on the plate."

"But surely Mr. Stanwood lived here once."

"I think not, sir; never heard the name; and the door was closed in his face.

Harry's heart smote him. "Where could they have gone? What might not have happened to them during his absence and neglect? Were they all lost to him forever? The old home looked less repulsive now.

Tired of inquiries, he procured a directory and went through the whole list of Stanwoods; painters, merchants, truckmen, ragmen he found in palaces and hovels, in elegant, airy, and in squalid, noisome streets, all answering to his own aristocratic name; but none acquainted with his birth or kin. Thrice passing by the cottage, he read his father's name upon the gate, and would not enter; sure that it could not be the abode of those who used to mourn and sigh through the months, in that only home which he could recollect.

"But it may be some relative," he said, and returning as a last resource, he opened the little gate, not seeing the slight form which flitted across the piazza and disappeared among its vines.

"There, mother, I told you so! He has come, Harry has come! But he is not to see you first up here, it looks too much like the old invalidism. Quick, take off that old cap, for this is ten times more becoming; and I want him to realize what a beauty you are."

"I can hardly believe you; I am all in a tremble, child! But why did you not wait and greet him first yourself? You have not grown indifferent to Harry?"

"What a question! No; but I only thought of you, which was natural considering your past anxieties. You know he has not seen me for an age, and I should have needed to wait and introduce myself. Now I think of it, mamma," all this while Bessie was hooking hooks, tying bows, pinning collars and ruffles, by way of improving her mother's dress. "Now I think of it, I will play a trick upon Harry, and see if he recognizes me: mind, if he asks any questions, Bessie is not at home, and her friend, Miss Stanley, is taking her place."

What surprise, and joy, and tenderness there was in that meeting between the mother and her long lost son! They were seated together upon a sofa, talking earnestly, and Harry looking amazed and confused as if he were talking in a dream, when Mr. Stanwood entered with a demure young lady, whom he introduced as Miss Stanley, an intimate acquaintance.

It was well for the plot that Harry did not see the amused expression which flitted over his mother's face, and which would keep returning whenever she took in Bessie's transformation. Not without difficulty, she had straightened the bright curls and bound them tightly over her ears; behind which they terminated in an ugly twist; her fairy form was disguised in an old, short-waisted dress, a relic of boarding-school finery; and the awkward constraint of her manners completed the change.

With a single glance, and a mental "Where did they ever pick up such a curious, little, old specimen of humanity?" Harry dismissed her from his thoughts.

But she was not so easily to be dismissed: he soon found this queer little specimen to be the guiding spirit of his home. He met her every where: in garret, cellar, kitchen, garden, wherever he entered queer little Miss Stanley flitted away just too soon for recall, if indeed he had wished to recall her. She presided at table, she watered the plants, and dusted, and then was in his mother's room reading aloud, or nursing and petting her, and anon, in the kitchen she and Ollie held grave, mysterious consultations.

The elders entering heartily into the spirit of Bessie's plot, combined to mystify him: his father was usually away, his mother, just recovering from serious illness, spent nearly all her time alone, and nothing was left for Harry but to sit by the parlor fire and watch little Miss Stanley flicker about. Presently he began to wonder about her; to ask himself questions which he would not deign to ask any one else; for Harry was an aristocrat, and what should he care for this poor, little drudge? Still he saw plainly enough that without her fairy fingers all the home machinery would stop; and thus the fascination grew and grew, unconsciously to its victim, until the slight interest deepened into a very strong one; and Harry, while pretending to read his newspaper, was all the while only watching her. When smoking upon the piazza and seemingly absorbed in dreams, he still was watching Miss Stanley through the vines. Then he began to assist her, to take the hammer from her slight fingers

and nail up the broken frame himself; to bring water for her flowers, and help prune her vines.

"You've done it now!" said Ollie, one morning, when they had reached this state of things, and Harry had been at home about a week. "If you can entice him to work, with his pride and selfishness, I never will say again that you are not a true born witch."

"You never did say so, Ollie, however extravagant the opinion. But dear Harry is only thoughtless, and what a splendid fellow! Oh, I am so proud and so fond, that sometimes I can hardly keep from hugging him—how he would start to see demure, little Miss Stanley take such a liberty!"

"I guess he could stand the infliction, by the way he watches you out of the corners of his eyes. I see through him, and I know the Stanwood race by heart; he is too proud to make any inquiries, he would not betray an interest in the humble girl whose only claim——"

"Don't talk about claims, Ollie; there is but one claim between us all, to love each other."

"But, Miss Bessie, I think it high time for you to finish this frolic, and let Master Harry have his rightful place. It makes me ache to see you wait and tend upon him like a servant. I never shall forget that first morning after he came, when I found you in the cellar trying to black his boots; and he asleep in bed, great, strong man that he is. And at the table if any thing is wanted, instead of helping himself or calling me, his lordship looks at the empty place, and then at you; and off you run and bring whatever he wishes. I know how he feels, I know the Stanwoods by heart, he thinks it is not a man's place to meddle in household matters, not dignified. Cannot you see, Miss, that by all these things you are establishing dangerous precedents?" Ollie had caught Mr. Stanwood's word.

"You and Ollie hold astonishingly long conferences," said Harry, bringing his chair to the table where our heroine sat at work.

"Yes, since I attempted taking your sister's place, and have discovered Ollie to be a very useful and important personage. I never hear you speak of Bessie, Mr. Stanwood; are you not impatient to meet her again?"

"Do not mention it, I think only with disgust how my sister was banished from home in childhood; how she must have grown up heartless and frivolous, with no wise and loving parental hand to guide her. Girls need home influences, and without them are worse than nothing, from my own character I can judge what hers must be; had my mother, twenty years ago, been what

she now is, we might both have become useful and even distinguished members of society. Now here am I, a mere idler in the world, and Bess, I doubt not, is a silly, sentimental belle." Since Harry's agreeable disappointment in the home, he had obstinately centered all his misgivings upon Bessie, notwithstanding divers hints which would escape from Ollie's lips.

"We do not all depend upon untoward influences, Mr. Stanwood, and though Bessie may not be very deep in her wisdom, nor very ambitious of distinction, I think you will find she has a good, little, quiet character of her own."

"Then Bessie is a friend of yours?" said Harry, looking into Miss Stanley's face. "I wish that instead of my sister's friend, you were my sister's self." He spoke it with a careless tone, but with earnestness beneath.

"Suppose I were your sister! Mr. Stanwood?"

"Well, it is pleasant to dream; and the cast of your features is not unlike hers as I remember them, and her hair was just the shade of this." Actually Harry's hand touched, nay, stroked poor little Miss Stanley's hair by way of illustration—"this color; but it fell in showers of golden curls." Mrs. Stanwood's bell rang, and the maiden flitted away; returning soon, she did not resume the seat beside Harry, but busied herself in another part of the room. He felt her presence, but did not raise his eyes from studying the cinders, where he seemed to have found a knotty problem; he was awaking all at once, considering what must have wrought the wonderful changes in his home, and whence Miss Stanley came, and whether Bess were really worthy to be his sister after all; dear Bess! who had been the one gleam of sunshine in his dismal childhood, who had placed her little hand in his so confidingly, and bewitched him out of many a sorrowful mood: dear little Bess! Suppose she were not all that he could wish, whose fault, Master Harry Stanwood? who had united with the rest in neglecting her? Ah, how charitable he would be with her selfishness and frivolity. Where was she now, could he not go to her, and ask forgiveness for the past?

"Miss Stanley!"

"Very much at your service, sir!"

Was it a vision come back from his childhood? There stood the identical Bessie of his dreams, with the witching, confiding smile, and golden curls: there stood she one second, and then a flash of light overspread all the past and present for Harry Stanwood.

"You darling! My own Bessie!" and he clasped her to his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT night there was a long conference between two who sat in the piazza, after all others in the cottage had gone to rest. A thousand questions and replies, a thousand regrets and resolutions passed: and Bessie's heart ached for excess of joy.

"And through all these discouraging efforts, you never once fainted or confessed to yourself any uneasiness and disgust with life?"

"How could any one wish to die until her work was finished? No, Harry, I had encouragement enough, in finding how much a poor, little, weak girl like me could accomplish. You will find me a tyrant in my way, and I have been constantly gratified in this point: they all grew so fond of me, and yielded to me so readily, it was like a miracle."

"Why, Bess, you have done more than he who takes a city, or accumulates a fortune, and who the world calls great. Who would think there was brain enough under those fluttering curls to plan and execute such an enterprise as yours?"

"I do not think it was my brain," said Bessie, thoughtfully, "it was heart: those whom I loved were suffering, and I longed to help, and was glad to live for them. I only did the best I could each day, and learned to find my joy in theirs; you are mistaken about all this heroism and self-sacrifice; so long as I could not be happy while they were miserable, do you not see that it was a kind of selfishness to comfort them?"

"Hush, little sophist, you cannot comfort my conscience so easily. Whilst you have been making a slave and martyr of yourself, you poor, slight thing, I, a strong man, have lounged idly through existence; earning only to squander; criticising others, while I was worse myself. 'What is the use of a name,' I thought to myself, 'without friends. What is the use of wealth without a home?' so I flattered my idleness and nursed my foolish hereditary pride, until I came here at length from mere ennui, little dreaming what a lesson and what a rebuke I should find in my home. Now listen, to-morrow I shall suddenly receive despatches requiring my immediate presence, and you will not see me again until I have proved myself worthy of my name, and talents, and opportunities; and harder still, worthy of my sister Bess."

And Harry kept his word: constant letters proved that his interest in honor had not diminished, while frequent mention of his name in the papers of California, whither he had returned, proved him to be a prominent and useful citizen. Then money came home to purchase the cottage,

and then news that Henry Stanwood, Esq., had been elected a member of Congress, but would visit friends at the north, before assuming the duties of his office. Then came a great bustle at the cottage door one day, and Mrs Stanwood ran out on the piazza to meet the stranger who had just alighted, and Bessie clung to him in an ecstasy of joy, and Mr. Stanwood, as he watched the group with a fatherly pride, waited impatiently for his own turn to be recognized; and poor, old Ollie had her hand half shaken off; for now that Harry had some just cause for pride, the foolish vanity of old had passed away.

It seemed as if Harry had half the interests of California upon his hands, so hurried was he, so constantly bustling about, or deep in calculations and discussions with some business friend; no one would suspect him to be the youth who had so lately lounged about this very house, hopeless and purposeless.

He procured his father's election as president of a bank; this appointment gave Bessie unspeak-

able delight. With less satisfaction, the little maiden received certain papers which were said to prove her the possessor of a handsome fortune in her own right. What could she do with money? What wish had she ungratified? But Harry laughed when she asked him to take back his gift, and told how wants always came in the train of gold, and that very soon she would be coaxing him for more.

"But, dear Harry, how can I ever thank you?"

"By using and enjoying it, my best of sisters! What is a little paltry gold, which a mere stroke of fortune brought me, in comparison with the life time of beautiful self-sacrifice, which has ennobled us all, which has so gently drawn us back to our true selves. Ah, Bessie, neither Stanleys nor Stanwoods, with all their family pride, have ever furnished such a noble 'precedent' as you in your meek self-forgetfulness."

"Well, it does beat all," said Ollie, "how, from first to last, Miss Bessie has had her way."

HOW TO WRITE FASHIONABLY.

BY SMITH JONES, JR.

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HOW TO WRITE FASHIONABLY.

BY SMITH JONES, JR.

"My dear," said Mrs. Jones to me, one evening. "I want to go to writing school."

I looked up from the evening paper, which I was perusing, and answered in astonishment.

"To writing school! Surely, my love, you are jesting. You, who write so beautifully, want to go to writing school?"

I saw, in fancy, as I spoke, the exquisite chirography, which had made the letters of Mrs. Jones, before we were married, such treasures to me: and involuntarily I rubbed my eyes, to see if I was not asleep and dreaming.

But Mrs. Jones replied somewhat tartly,

"Indeed I don't write beautifully. I've an ugly, vulgar round hand, just like that of a school mistress; and you don't call that beautiful, do you?"

At hearing this I pinched myself to be assured again that I was not dozing. Finding that I had never been more thoroughly awake in my life, and seeing the eyes of Mrs. Jones bent on me as if indignant at my silence, I stammered out a reply.

"My dear creature," I said, "I don't—really—understand you. You are not serious—in saying that you don't write well—"

But she interrupted me at this point.

"I didn't say anything about writing well," she replied, pettishly. "I said I wrote a vulgar, round hand. And I now say," she added, emphatically, "that I want to go to writing school to learn to write the fashionable hand. I'm positively ashamed of my present style of writing."

"It seems to me," I answered, still bewildered and amazed, "that it couldn't be more elegant. The hair strokes are so delicate, and the thick strokes taper off so beautifully, that it really looks like the finest engraving—"

"You men never understand anything," said Mrs. Jones, interrupting me, with a contemptuous toss of the head. "To think that there is any style in hair strokes!"

"Your hand is so legible—" But again I was cut short.

"The more vulgar for being so. Legibility is a merit in the hand-writing of a clerk, but not in that of a gentleman, much less a lady."

"You don't mean to assert," I retorted, beginning to think my wife crazy, "that you want to learn to write illegibly?"

"I mean," said Mrs. Jones, decidedly, "that I

won't write my round, school girl hand any longer; and that if I can't learn the fashionable hand I won't write at all. I have to blush for my ignorance every time I receive a note from Mrs. Brown, or Mrs. White, because I can't reply in the same stylish hand-writing."

"Ahem!" I said, beginning to comprehend the mystery, for both these ladies were the very quintessence of fashion. "Pray," I asked, "who teaches this new hand?"

"Miss Sharp."

"Ah! a lady. I thought, perhaps, it was some famous writing master."

"A writing master! As if they didn't all alike teach the same vulgar, common-place, copy-book hands." And Mrs. Jones spoke with extreme contempt. "No, Miss Sharp is an English lady, who has moved in the first circles abroad, where this hand is used exclusively."

Light was beginning to break in, more and more, on my bewildered mind. I did not speak yet, however, but waited for further developments. My excellent wife went on.

"The Duchess of Sutherland employs no other hand, and the Queen herself writes it always, except when signing state papers—"

But now I interrupted in turn. If the queen wrote the hand, I knew it was useless to hold out, so I determined to surrender with a good grace.

"Say no more, my love," I cried. "You should have told me this at once. Go, by all means, and learn this new hand: it cannot but be both *distingué* and elegant."

The conversation ceased at this point. Important affairs of business, moreover, drove the subject from my mind, though occasionally I could not avoid noticing how much my wife appeared absorbed in correspondence. She was always now writing, or receiving little, perfumed notes, such as ladies are continually sending to each other.

At last, one evening, she interrupted my reveries about stocks, the money market, and other subjects of masculine interest, by handing me what seemed a bill. I say what seemed, for the writing was totally illegible, so that I could judge only from the general appearance of the slip of paper. I turned it first one way, then another, and held it in a dozen different lights, but I could see nothing except a few lines of strokes, as we

used to call them at school. These strokes were at such a decided angle that they looked like rows of bricks in process of tumbling, arranged, by some mischievous urchin, to knock each other down indefinitely.

"What, in the name of sense, is it?" I cried, at last. "Chinese writing, or what?"

As I spoke, I looked up, and was quite amazed to see Mrs. Jones very red in the face. Before I could say a word more she snatched the paper from me.

"Chinese writing indeed!" And, truth compels me to say she answered in quite a huff. "You know very well what it is, Smith, only you think you'll make fun of me. But I won't submit to any such vulgarity, let me tell you. So give me the twenty dollars at once, for teachers like Miss Sharp, who have had the Duchess of Sutherland for a pupil, are not accustomed to waiting."

The scales fell from my eyes. I gave a prolonged whistle. I well knew my wife would consider me a low fellow for doing it, but I could not have helped it to save my life, my amazement was so great.

"That's the new style of writing then," I exclaimed, when I recovered breath. "You've to

pay twenty dollars for learning to scrawl in that fashion——"

But here I stopped suddenly. There was a warning flash in the eyes of Mrs. Jones that arrested my words. I knew how nervous the dear creature was, and that therefore it would not do to excite her. I had already, I reflected, gone too far. So I meekly drew forth my pocket-book, and taking out a twenty dollar bill, gave it to my wife.

There was little said during the remainder of the evening. Indeed several days passed before Mrs. Jones became entirely affable. Nor to this day is she convinced that I was not trifling with her sensibilities on that occasion; for, whenever I venture to recur to the subject, she becomes frigid to a degree that precludes all amicable discussion.

I have since discovered that Miss Sharp was once a maid servant, in some English nobleman's family; but it is extremely doubtful whether she ever saw her mistress write, much less the Queen. However she has managed to become the rage, or rather her angular hieroglyphics have, and I had the pleasure of paying an additional twenty dollars, to-day, in order that my daughter also might learn to WRITE FASHIONABLY.

IN SPITE OF ALL.

BY ANDRÉ GÉRARD.

TRANSLATED BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

CHAPTER I.



In the confines of Styria, in one of the most picturesque mountain districts of the whole region, stood the old chateau of the Duke de Rosenthal; and thither, one lovely morning in the early summer, came Gaston Bernard, fresh from his native Paris.

The Frenchman had never met his host, but that gentleman had been for years the intimate friend of Bernard's uncle, who was one of the most celebrated French painters of the day. When the duke learned that Gaston was preparing a book on an important era in mediæval history, he insisted that the young gentleman should give him the pleasure of a visit, promising as a reward free access to many old documents which might prove highly useful in his work.

The evening of his arrival at Rosenthal, Bernard made a long entry in his diary, and his first impressions are best given in his own words:

"Here I am, safely housed in this stately old chateau, which is perched in the most picturesque fashion possible on the side of a steep hill, overhung by huge rocks, encircled by a wide forest, and possessing views of such mingled grandeur and loveliness that already I fear my inherited artistic instincts will get the better of my determination to do nothing but decipher ancient manuscripts, and that I shall forget wholly my intention to become an historian, in the irresistible desire to imprison some of these varied landscapes on canvas.

"The interior of the chateau is worthy of its massive front and noble surroundings.

Everything is on a grand scale, and the furnishing displays a princely luxury tempered by a taste fairly severe in its correctness. There are splendid leather hangings which date back to the best days of Cordova, marvelous oak settles, cabinets, and bridal chests, a wealth of marbles and bronzes, but no frippery, no gilding; and all the modern accessories are in keeping with these treasures of the past.

"As for the duchess and her daughter, they certainly belong to some supernal paradise, and have come down temporarily to make the happiness of the charming husband and father. I must begin with my introduction to Mademoiselle Mina, whom I met the first of the three, in a manner as unexpected as it was delightful.

"I had grown tired of my long night's journey in the diligence, and this morning early hired a post-chaise at Goesting for the remaining eight miles. After perhaps an hour's drive, I was tempted by the sight of a winding path which the postillion assured me would shorten the route to a pleasant walk, adding that I could not lose the way if I tried, so I quickly descended and let the chaise go on with my luggage.

"I had a picturesque stroll of two miles through the forest, then I emerged on a broad plateau which commanded a fine view of the chateau in the middle distance. Close by me, in the shadow of a group of oaks, two ladies were seated on camp-stools, the elder reading aloud while her companion worked at a sketch in water-colors with a swiftness and ease which marked a practiced hand.

"She sat there with her face turned so that I could see it plainly, as I stood screened from sight by the trunk of a tree. She resembled my uncle's picture of Goethe's 'Marguerite' so much that I am inclined to think he must have had her photograph by him while painting that lovely countenance. There was the same low white fore-

head, the same innocent expression, the same sweet smile, and, to complete the likeness, down her shoulders hung two long braids of golden hair. But, as I studied the face, I perceived the difference between it and that of the picture. The complexion was more transparent, the features more delicate. Then, too, this girl had an indescribable air of elegance remarkable at her age; a Marguerite, I admit, but no peasant maiden—a Marguerite with fourteen quarterings at least.

"The elder lady might have been thirty. She was a dimpled little brunette, with bright eyes, a musical voice, and an air of innocence and romance which, unlike as the two were, gave her a species of resemblance to her beautiful charge.

"I felt so certain they must be Mademoiselle de Rosenthal and her governess or companion, that, when I had feasted my eyes for a few moments on the enchanting tableau they presented, I marched forward, hat in hand, and asked to have the route to the chateau pointed out. The question, I must admit, sounded singularly superfluous, since the path was as easy to trace as a road in the Bois de Boulogne; but I could think of no more brilliant fashion of introducing myself.

"The lovely blonde gave me one glance and leaned toward her companion, saying in a rapid whisper: 'Our Frenchman!' Then, while the elder lady politely gave me sundry unnecessary directions, the girl's great blue eyes studied me with undisguised curiosity. Suddenly she exclaimed: 'Mademoiselle, we can take monsieur with us in the carriage.' She looked at me again with a bewitching little laugh, and added with the simple directness of a child: 'I am sure you are the Parisian papa is expecting—Monsieur Gaston Bernard, I mean.'

"'That is my name,' I said, nor was I ever more pleased to claim my rightful cognomen.

"And I am Mina de Rosenthal,' she rejoined, 'and this is my dear friend Mademoiselle Dumont. I am so glad you have come, monsieur! Papa was wondering last night if you could not reach us to-day. Do you want to go on at once? If you are not too tired, I would like to finish my sketch.'

"I hastened to declare my entire willingness to wait as long as she might desire; so she threw a shawl over the root of a tree

at the side of her camp-stool, and said unceremoniously: 'Then sit down, please; I shall have done, in a very little while.'

"For a moment, I felt fairly disconcerted by this Arcadian simplicity, so unlike the affected timidity of most Parisian girls; but Mademoiselle Mina chattered on in a delightful fashion, asking me unhesitatingly all sorts of questions about my book, my drawings, my uncle's pictures, and himself, whom she had remembered having seen when a child. In the meanwhile, her governess sat smilingly by, evidently not in the least surprised by the young lady's freedom of speech and manner; a freedom, be it remembered, like that of a child, not a woman.

"When the sketch was done, she demanded my honest criticism, and I gave her advice about lightening a mass of foliage that was somewhat too heavy. She insisted on my taking her seat and making the change. While I worked, she leaned over me, following every stroke of my brush with the attention of a diligent pupil. I will confess that my eyes grew a little bewildered at seeing, each time I looked up, that fresh candid young face so close to my own that I could feel her breath on my cheek.

"When I had finished, Mademoiselle Mina joyfully declared that I had made her pet tree look living, and called on her governess to praise the effect. Then she quickly gathered her sketching materials together, and, before I could take them from her hands, ran down a path into the wood, calling on us to follow. At the foot of a steep declivity, an open carriage was waiting, and in this we drove toward the chateau.

"Presently, at a turn in the road, we saw a gentleman on horseback, riding swiftly along a route to the left, and Mademoiselle Mina called in German at the top of her voice: 'Papa! papa! we have found your French friend, and are taking him home with us.'

"This was my sufficiently unceremonious presentation to the Duke de Rosenthal; but I doubt if he heard, though he waved his hat as he rode on, while Mademoiselle Dumont explained that he was in haste to catch the noon diligence, by which he wished to send dispatches.

"At length, we reached the chateau, which owns a portcullis that gives admittance to an immense court-yard, at the further extremity

of which a lofty flight of steps, guarded by two immense bronze lions, conducts to the grand entrance-hall.

"Welcome to Rosenthal!" cried Mademoiselle Mina, extending her hand as we crossed the threshold. "Now, monsieur, I must take you at once to mamma; she will be delighted to see you. She is a Pole, and dotes on French people." I ventured to suggest that I was very dusty and tumbled, and, as my luggage must have arrived, it might be well to make some change of toilette before presenting myself to the duchess; but the merciless young creature exclaimed quickly: "Never mind your dress; you will have plenty of time to show yourself attired in the latest mode."

"There was a perceptible mockery in her tone, which cut my excuses short; and I followed her in silence down a long corridor with oak wainscots on which were carved episodes from the Old Testament, in a fashion peculiar to an early era of the Middle Ages, with bizarre human figures and apocryphal quadrupeds.

"Look at all the odd beasts," cried Mademoiselle Mina. "They look like ever so many of our neighbors; when you have made acquaintance about here, you will see the resemblance."

"She made a comically grave reverence before a tall unicorn, saying: "Madame la princesse, I have the honor to salute you?" Then she added: "The living image, I assure you, monsieur; only wait till you meet the stately dame—who, by the by, holds me in horror!"

"We crossed a square antechamber and reached two heavily curtained doors which a waiting lackey opened, and my conductress called unceremoniously:

"Mamma, I have brought Monsieur Bernard. I told him that being a Frenchman was the surest possible passport to your favor."

"We were standing in a great room, hung and furnished with ancient Genoese damask as rare as it was gorgeous. In the centre of the apartment, in an ebony easy-chair encrusted with silver carvings, sat one of the loveliest women I ever saw. She was an exquisite blonde, with tender dreamy blue eyes, and did not look a day over six-and-twenty.

"Several women coquettishly dressed in

Polish costumes were seated near, and she and they were busy with an immense piece of embroidery of lilies and roses on a background of white silk, which I learned was intended as a gift for the most famous pilgrim church in all Austria. The picture carried my fancy centuries back; it seemed to me that I must be bowing before some chatelaine of the days of the Crusades, who, during her lord's absence in the Holy Land, was seeking to propitiate the saints in his behalf.

"I felt uncomfortably modern and commonplace, but the duchess received me with an encouraging frankness that bore no resemblance to the coquetry which so often appears the interpretation women of the world give to the phrase cordiality.

"We talked for half an hour about Paris, the late war, and our misfortunes, for which she displayed the warmest sympathy. I confess that, though I secretly smiled, I was pleased to see her, when she mentioned Bismarck's name, make a rapid sign of the cross, as if conjuring an evil spirit.

"Suddenly the doors opened and the groom of the chambers announced the duke, who entered with a grace at once easy and soldierly. He bowed before his wife and kissed her hand with an air of passionate adoration that was plainly quite unconscious, then he gave me a welcome so hearty that one would have supposed my visit was really a favor. He is a splendid specimen of a man: fifty, perhaps; his hair somewhat gray, his eyes blue as steel, a superb profile, and an air of distinction I have seldom seen approached.

"He talked to me of my uncle, for whom he has evidently an attachment as sincere as his admiration for his talent. Then he made interested inquiries about my proposed work. In the midst of our conversation, the dressing-bell rang, and we both took leave of the duchess.

"As we passed down the corridor, my host began abruptly to talk of his wife and daughter, as well as of Mademoiselle Dumont. I did not ask questions; from the first, it seemed to me that he had a motive in all he said—a reason for making this frank declaration in regard to his domestic affairs.

"You have seen my treasures," he observed. "My wife is a civilized angel, my daughter an angel in the savage state, in which I desire to preserve her as long as

possible. Eve, before she left the Garden, was not more innocent or more fearless.'

"She is like my uncle's Marguerite," I said, "but a Marguerite with royal quarterings instead of a simple peasant maid."

"Charming!" he cried. "I shall tell her mother—who, by the way, is scarcely less innocent of this world's wicked ways. I am always amused, when we go to Vienna, to watch the duchess's utter unconsciousness of the incense that all the society gallants try to burn on her altar. Outside of her love for Mina and myself, she has only two passions—one is for beggars, the other for proscribed Poles! Agreeable illusions which help to empty my purse, but I don't complain."

"I should think not," was all I ventured to respond.

"The fourth in our little party, and a most useful as well as agreeable adjunct, is Mademoiselle Dumont," continued the duke. "She has been with us ten years—since Mina was under eight. She is a trusted friend and the best of women. She passes her time in study, in teaching my daughter, and working for charity and the Church. She was only nineteen when she joined us; she was engaged to a young Russian lieutenant, who wanted to be a captain before he took a wife."

"And he is still waiting promotion?"

"Oh, no; though she is still waiting for him. She believes that he was compromised in a conspiracy against the Czar, and sent to Siberia; she hopes and prays. I have discovered that he is married and a father of a family; has left the service, and lives on the lands of his rich wife near Warsaw. If I were to tell this to Mademoiselle Dumont, she would not believe me; if I proved it to her, she would break her heart. So I keep silence and leave her to her dream. I assure you, she is the third celestial spirit that brightens my roof."

"To say that you are fortunate in your possessions would be too commonplace," I responded.

"But true," he replied. "As for your humble servant, I am only a soldier; that is, all that can be imagined of what is most unangelic and most unromantic, but at least I can boast of being a faithful friend to those who deserve my friendship."

"Then he showed me to my rooms and

left me. As the door closed behind him, I thought:

"A word to the wise is sufficient. Never was a warning more neatly and pleasantly given. A charming wife, a bewitching daughter, a delightful governess! Admire all three—enjoy their society; but remember the seventeen quarterings of the Rosenthals, and respect the illusion of the constant demoiselle."

"Seventeen quarterings! No, I shall not forget, monsieur the duke! Yet somehow an unaccountable sadness stole over me; it came back again and again during the gay talk of the evening; it haunts me still, as I sit here writing these lines.

"But what folly, to indulge in a sadness that can offer no reason for its existence! Seventeen quarterings, and two royal blazons among them! Verily, this youthful pearl of beauty is enshrined in a dazzling setting; but that need not hinder my admiring her at a respectful distance."

CHAPTER II.

THAT same evening, Mademoiselle Mina opened a diary which she kept with more or less regularity, and set down certain details of the day and her opinion thereon.

"One of my bullfinches died of the pip this morning," she wrote. "This afternoon, papa's Frenchman arrived, and he pleases me very well indeed. Mamma pronounced him a charming young man, but that is mamma's formula for all the young men who climb up to Rosenthal; which proves that she never takes the trouble to notice any of them."

"Now, in my judgment, this Frenchman does not in the least resemble the stereotyped 'charming young man,' always old and always new, differing only in the cut of a waistcoat or the color of a scarf. What pleases me in Monsieur Gaston Bernard is a something peculiar to himself which I cannot define, though it is so evident. I think one often feels things of which it would be impossible to give an explanation."

Mademoiselle Mina's intuitions had gone straight to the truth: Gaston Bernard was so unlike the ordinary specimen of modern youth, that he seemed fairly a type by himself. He had the artist temperament and was full of originality, strength, and independence, so could not fail to stand out in

bold relief from the courtly society to which the girl was accustomed, in which only half-tones were considered correct, and whose devotees would sooner have been considered wanting in intellect than in good form.

It was quite natural that Mademoiselle de Rosenthal should be attracted by the newcomer's unlikeness to the men she had met; for, by some inexplicable miracle, this creature, whose genealogy counted the proudest names in all Germany, had been born with a horror of etiquette and ceremony, and irreverently styled their aristocratic neighbors "bats and owls."

She had an imaginary critic whose pardon she was always asking after any thoughtless speech, and, not long before Bernard's arrival, greatly amused her father by kissing some flowers which she had just bought of a beggar, and then crying out to her invisible Mentor in comically pretended terror:

"Pardon me, Aunt Twilight; I will ask for a finger-bowl as soon as I get in the house."

Without counting this and other shadowy personages, Mademoiselle Mina possessed three Mentors in flesh and blood—three solemn and awful ladies, her grand-aunts: who, during their visits at the chateau, always tried to teach their youthful relative "correct deportment," to use their favorite phrase, and only received severe metaphorical scratches in return for their solicitude.

In vain did the duke and duchess, when called on to interfere, endeavor to assume airs of severity; for these were quickly dispelled by the doleful mien that wicked little Mina would assume, as she walked up and down the salons, while an aunt marched majestically on either side, and the third stately spinster gave directions as to the carriage of her head, the pose of her arms, and the length of her steps.

These lessons usually ended in such open mockery on the part of the pupil, such undisguised caricaturing of the three relatives in turn, that the duke would be forced to rush off, in order to hide his laughter. The duchess would stand her ground, reprove Mina, and admit she lacked dignity; but her sorrowful tone was so evidently assumed that the noble relatives in private blamed her more severely than they did her daughter.

When Mina was about thirteen, the oldest

of the sisters believed that she had at length discovered the reason why this daughter of the Rosenthals showed herself infected by "the wickedness of radical theories and a degradingly republican spirit." She found, after diligent inquiry, that Mina's nurse had had a Polish father, but a French mother, who had been a sixteenth cousin to Danton. This nurse was still employed at the chateau, and the spinster had her summoned and bitterly reproached her for having dared to nourish a descendant of the Rosenthals on milk so tainted and accursed.

However, in spite of this drop of poisoned blood in her blue veins, Mademoiselle Mina had grown up tranquilly in the midst of earnest and well-directed study, varied by pleasures as innocent as they were simple. Gradually, as she advanced toward womanhood, while preserving her charming naturalness and child-like candor, she developed a graciousness and gentle dignity of manner, when circumstances demanded, which even her disapproving great-aunts were forced to admire, though of course giving themselves and their unwearied exertions credit therefor.

The admirable course of instruction pursued by Mademoiselle Dumont had so thoroughly developed the brilliant intellectual qualities of her pupil, that, although not quite eighteen, she was an earnest student and a well-educated girl. Latin and Greek she read with ease, spoke French without accent, and was almost as familiar with English, Spanish, and Italian as with her native German. Added to these accomplishments, she possessed an absolute genius for the piano, and sketched both figures and landscapes with a fidelity and dash really surprising at her age. She was a splendid horsewoman, and could exercise for hours without feeling fatigue, as her supple young frame, naturally strong, had been healthily developed by wise physical training.

But the crowning charm of this winning and gifted creature was her perfect candor and utter unconsciousness of her own beauty. Even yet it must be admitted that, though she had learned on occasion "to play the great lady," as she said, she was given to all sorts of madcap freaks and escapades.

One of the park keepers declared that, since her seventeenth birthday, he had surprised mademoiselle perched on a branch of a tall tree, examining a bird's nest; but

everybody in the chateau religiously kept this indiscreet revelation from the ears of the great-aunts, though the duchess never felt certain the audacious damsel might not herself sometime avow the truth, just for the satisfaction of horrifying her august relatives.

This was the girl with whom Gaston Bernard was to be thrown into intimate relations during a period of several weeks. At twentyseven years of age, Gaston had already given proofs of possessing talents as versatile as they were superior. He had the rare—and, as a rule, unfortunate—ability to do many things well. So far, he had succeeded in everything he had undertaken, and in painting and literature had produced several works which had attracted much attention; though, oddly enough, considering how pronounced was his imaginative faculty, his literary efforts had taken either a scientific or an historical form, and as an Oriental scholar he already ranked among reliable authorities.

The man's indomitable will had early given him thorough self-mastery, and beneath his gay spirits and laughing cynicism dwelt a spirit fairly feminine in its conception of purity. He had never been in love, save with his ideal. Like Pygmalion, he had his statue, to which each day he added some new charm. However much this invisible Galatea might vary at times in other minor details, she was always a simple country-girl, without fortune or rank, who was to owe everything to his care and adoration.

The morning after his arrival at the chateau, the image of his Galatea kept rising between him and the pages of the old books which the duke's secretary had spread out on a table in the library; but Galatea had suddenly changed the color of her tresses. These had been raven in hue, only a week before; now he perceived that the waving locks were bright as spun gold, and her eyes, instead of black, were blue as sapphires.

Toward luncheon-time, he left his books and went out into the garden, perhaps to see how his abruptly transformed goddess would look by daylight. He had not been there long when a page brought a message from Mademoiselle Mina, requesting him to come to her study, to look at some drawings of which she had spoken the evening before.

He found the young student and her

governess seated in an octagon room, whose open windows commanded a view of the lake and a stream that poured down the hillside in a succession of cascades.

Mina greeted him with a friendly bow, while Mademoiselle Dumont begged his indulgence for a few moments, as the lesson was not quite finished. He sat down and listened as the pupil explained, with the clearness of a learned doctor, that "rationalism was an abuse of the spirit of philosophy." She went gravely on, apparently unconscious of his presence after that first greeting, and to Gaston's secret amusement he perceived that, while so clearly expounding the theory she had studied, her dainty fingers had twisted her pocket-handkerchief into the shape of a rat, with which she played as she talked. Her serious countenance and the little wrinkle of thought between her delicately arched brows made so piquant a contrast to her sport that Bernard longed for a pencil and sketch-book. As he followed her answers and remarks, which revealed earnest reflection and an intimate knowledge of her subject, Bernard said to himself:

"A man's intelligence and a child's simplicity! So has my ideal; she has golden hair and blue eyes, too—they resemble each other! Attention, heart! But luckily this one is noble, an heiress, while my Galatea is poor, friendless, alone in the world, except for my love and care."

Mademoiselle Mina finished a brilliant peroration on the usefulness of philosophy, then suddenly tossed her rat into the air and exclaimed:

"Luncheon-time, thank goodness! I am so hungry that I could not have held out another five minutes; I should certainly have devoured my handkerchief! Good-morning, Monsieur Gaston! The sketches must wait. Come, come—both of you!"

At table, without the least hesitation, the young lady asked the guest to accompany her on her ride; and when, before replying, Bernard glanced toward the duchess, that lady smiled approval and the duke said laughingly:

"Mina has already adopted you into her order of Freemasons, Monsieur Gaston; I pity you, but cannot interfere. Then, too, I am selfish: while she tyrannizes over you, I shall get a little respite."

"You do not mind, monsieur?" demanded the girl, with a smile which no man could have resisted.

"I am only too grateful," he replied.

As he spoke, he looked at the father, meaning his words to show that he had fully comprehended the reason for the explanations that gentleman had offered on the previous evening. The duke's face showed he caught his guest's intention, as he answered slowly:

"I am the richer by a new friend; I must write and thank your uncle."

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning, Bernard began his researches, in which Mademoiselle Mina had frankly volunteered her assistance.

"Butterfly as she is, you will find her as indefatigable as a little book-moth. Her patience in hunting through old manuscripts never gives way," was the duke's remark, which contained, his guest understood, a permission to accept the proffered service.

This was the commencement of several idyllic weeks: in which, however, Bernard accomplished much serious work—finding, as her father had predicted, that his beautiful aid was as unwearying as she was useful. During at least two hours each day, and oftener longer, she helped him either by copying manuscripts, or hunting for books, or relating from her store of legends some tale which accentuated and gave a local color to the particular epoch whereof he chanced to be writing.

Nominally, Mademoiselle Dumont acted as chaperon; but she was often absent. Frequently the duke or the duchess would look in on the engrossed pair, with a few interested remarks about the forthcoming book; but Bernard soon decided that even an English or American girl could hardly have been allowed more independence of action than this noble-born young German maiden.

Sometimes Mina would be perched on a step-ladder, eagerly hunting for some volume she had suddenly remembered; then, without warning, she would spring down, carry her prize over to the table at which Bernard sat, and, in displaying it, would bend so close over him that her hair touched his cheek, while he neglected his task and occasionally almost forgot his prudence in the delightful intoxication of the moment.

There were daily rides on horseback, walks among the hills with Mademoiselle Dumont, or drives with the duchess, followed by long delightful evenings of domesticity which gave the solitary Bernard a new and captivating idea of home. The days flew, and, when three weeks had passed, the young man wrote one night in his diary:

"Woman in intelligence, child in innocence—no fancy could have imagined a combination so rare and so bewitching. So far as she is concerned, her father's warning to me was not needed. She has a heart, but it has not yet awakened—it is not ready to rouse from its sleep.

"A proud creature at bottom, I think—unconsciously the laws of heredity will control her! What she calls her radicalism is only independence of spirit, a horror of the conventional. She dreams, as she told her father and me the other evening, of some unfortunate proscribed hero who is to fulfill her ideal. Ah, it is clear that her refugee would need the jewels of a coronet on his forehead!

"I am nothing in her life, beyond an agreeable distraction; I shall remain only a pleasant souvenir. It is plain that she likes me—she avows it on all occasions with that graceful candor which is one of her greatest charms. Only two days ago, as we were out walking, she said to me suddenly:

"When you are back again in your Paris and are seized by what you call one of your black hours, if your soul shivers under the monotony and cold, you must send it to Rosenthal; there will always be a warm corner ready for the visitor."

"Ah, it required all my courage to keep silence. Fool, how dare you even think that? And still several weeks of this delightful torment before I can finish the work I want to do. Come, Gaston, be a man—at least, do not be obliged to despise yourself! Yes, Mina, I shall think of you in the dark hours, but only as one might think of a beautiful sister gone to paradise."

Her head filled with marvelous chronicles, her soul aglow with generous chimeras, Mademoiselle de Rosenthal knew as little about the actual life of the ordinary world as if she belonged to another sphere. She believed only in what was good, tender, and sincere. The young girls whom she liked were angels—older women, perfection; and

often, when she aired her opinions, Bernard sighed to think that somewhere in the future this beautiful realm of illusions must be rudely dispelled.

"But let her keep her dreams," the duchess said to him, one day. "Leave her faith undisturbed. Who knows? Look at me: I believed and hoped everything at her age, and I have not been disappointed; fate has converted all my hopes into realized joys."

And Bernard said to himself:

"She is right. Why should not the daughter be as fortunate as the mother, and meet a love that will guard her with jealous solicitude from the corruptions and troubles of life?"

Away down in the bottom of his heart, it irritated the young man to remember that this happiness must be the care of another than himself; but he refused gallantly to admit the fact, and assured his conscience he rejoiced to think that sometime the beautiful creature would encounter the true prince. As for him, was he not to go away when this enchanting episode had reached its appointed length? Very soon now, must not the final parting come between him, plain bourgeois, and this heiress of a ducal house? Why should he revolt against destiny? Why court wretchedness by warring against the inevitable?

So the days fled, and each new morning seemed brighter and more unreal than its predecessors. The enchanted weeks slipped on until two whole months had gone, and Bernard's stay was nearly at an end.

The duke had been obliged to go to Vienna, and, in one of her letters to him, the duchess wrote:

"Monsieur Bernard grows on me continually; he is as good and honest as he is gifted. His attitude toward Mina is perfect; solicitous as that of a brother, and as staid as a grandfather's. As for her, she delights in his society and shows it so frankly that, as you said, we need have no fear. Yet this companionship has caused a certain change in the child—she is more of a woman. The time cannot be distant when that heart of hers will wake. If only, in point of birth and fortune, we can find for her a husband who will be as worthy, as fit a mate, as this youthful genius is in mind and imagination!"

"I will make a confession for you alone:

If there were many bourgeois of France like Gaston Bernard, I think that misalliances in the Faubourg St. Germain would risk becoming rather frequent."

If this letter had fallen under the eyes of her daughter or of the young Frenchman, what would have happened?

For the one, it might have proved a light to startle her soul into a consciousness of an unsuspected truth; for the other, an encouragement, in spite of his stern practical sense.

But neither ever saw the indiscreet avowal, and to the last Mina de Rosenthal remained utterly unaware why, into the midst of her gayest moods, a vague sadness would at times intrude, as new as it was inexplicable, at once troubling and sweet. As for Bernard, the fear that he might in some fashion betray the secret which he had ceased to disguise from his soul would often, as the time for his departure drew near, render his manner almost cold for a little. Mina noticed this and explained it in her own fashion.

"Monsieur Bernard begins to feel homesick for Paris," she said to Mademoiselle Dumont; "I flattered myself that he liked us all too well for that to happen."

"He likes us all as much as suits the temporary connection between him and us," the governess replied, quietly. "It may be years before he will meet us again—very likely never. He proposes to visit the East in the autumn; to go then to Australia—America—to pass, indeed, several years in traveling."

"Yes, I know," Mina answered, dreamily. "Ah, well, we shall not forget him, and I do not believe he will forget us; I must ask."

"It might hurt him to have you imply a doubt," mademoiselle said, wisely refraining from offering any stronger objection.

"You are right—it might. No, I will not ask," Mina answered, with a sigh for which she could not have accounted, had it by any chance occurred to her to try.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first of September came; Bernard's visit was at an end.

The duke had hurried back from Vienna on purpose to see him before he went, and the entire household united in lamentations over the necessity for the guest's departure. What added to the general sadness was the fact of which Mademoiselle Dumont had a short time before reminded her pupil:

none of them were likely to see their new friend for an indefinitely long period.

"But we shall read your book," the duke said; "we shall rejoice over your rapidly growing reputation. In whatever distant spot you may be, remember always that at Rosenthal you are not forgotten."

"I have to thank you for so much kindness," Bernard said, in a shaky voice.

"And I have to thank you; we are quits," rejoined the host.

At this instant, the door of the library opened and Mademoiselle Mina entered, attired in her riding-habit.

"I shall ride by the carriage to the station," she explained; "that will give me another half-hour with Monsieur Bernard."

So, for the last time, Bernard lifted her into the saddle and arranged the folds of her amazon.

"Nobody ever helped me up so well—not even you, papa," was the only remark she made.

She rode close to the open landau, along the shady road that wound through the oak forest. She was somewhat pale, and her lips were slightly compressed. Bernard watched her with a bursting heart, while some unseen tormentor seemed to moan in his ear:

"You are leaving happiness behind! You are losing forever the ideal of your youth! Look at her well! This is the soul kindred to your own; this is the bride you might have won, had fate been kinder! You are leaving her forever!"

They talked little, but neither was conscious of the long breaks between their conversation; they had long before reached that point of mutual comprehension in which silence has its own eloquent language.

Suddenly a long silvery thread from a spider's web floated toward Mina; she put out her hand, dexterously caught and laid it on Bernard's shoulder.

"I told you our mountain superstition," she said, with the pensive smile her lips had learned during the past weeks: "a thread from a spider's web, lighting on one's shoulder when starting on a journey, means good luck."

"I shall owe mine to you, in that case," he answered, quietly, clasping his hands hard over the stick he held, to keep them from snatching the ungloved fingers which rested for an instant on his sleeve. "I offer you my thanks in advance."

"You are sure to have good fortune," she said, "if my wishes can avail. One would like all the happiness in the world, just to give it to one's friends."

And the secret voice whispered in Bernard's ear:

"And she can give you nothing! Between you there's a barrier as high as the Egyptian Pyramids and cruel as death—a barrier of blazoned genealogies and untold millions."

They traversed the village and reached the station just as the train arrived. There was only space for hurried adieus, and, had there been, they must have remained unspoken; the final moment overwhelmed both.

"Adieu, Mademoiselle Mina," Bernard exclaimed, brokenly, "adieu!"

He could not add a word. Without speaking, Mina stretched out her hands; as he grasped them, he saw two tears glitter on her eyelashes. In another moment, she was galloping down the road, and Bernard stood there alone. The summer idyl had come to an end.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

KITTY ROSS.

BY MARIETTA HOLLEY.

"She pieced up every block of it with her own hands, Malviny did." And the proud mother spread abroad the gorgeous folds of the patch-work bedquilt before the eyes of the bewildered young minister like a triumphal banner.

"She thought at first she would have it a album quilt; but, finally, she decided on a blazing star, as Malviny says to me, 'it looks so kind o' heavenly.' You know stars are a bright yellow, and the sky is a blue ground-work jest like this. She thought it gave it a kind of a sacred look. She is dreadful religeus, Malviny is. I have said to her father, many a time, 'If she is ever snatched away from us, Pa, I hope he will be a religious man that snatches her.' A good many told me, when she was a little girl, that she was just cut for a minister's wife, she was so equinomical and industrious. She is an awful worker; there is seven hundred pieces in this bedquilt; that shows some industry, don't it, Mr. Thurston?"

"I beg your pardon, madam; I am afraid I didn't quite understand you!" His rather dreamy, gray eyes were looking out of the open window, down the emerald, daisy-emporaled meadow, stretching away to the green woods.

"I was saying there is seven hundred pieces of calico in this bedquilt; I didn't begrech layin' out the calico for her—not a bit; she out 'em all out in one day."

"Kitty helped her out 'em out, for I seen her; n' I want a piece of pie, or bread n'butter." Sunny, the fearless, had entered the room, and stood before the authoress of his life, with pleading in his tone, and utter indifference in his demeanor toward his visitor.

"Yes; Kitty helped her a sight," said Mrs. Ross, commencing to fold up the bedquilt, and she added, severely, "Little boys should be seen, and not heard."

"I am tired of bein' seen; I want to be heord a spell; m'eant I have the pie or bread n'butter? I want some strawberries on it. Haint Kitty got bick yet? I seen her start for 'em more'n a 'our ago."

"When Kitty gets a book in her hand, or gets out doors, there is no knowin' when she will be seen again. She is so different from Malviny. Why, if you will believe it, Mr. Thurston, if that girl should tell you the truth to-day, I believe

she would say that she thought a little bit of moss out of the woods was prettier than this blazing star bedquilt."

As she gave utterance to this astounding atrocity, on the part of Kitty, she stood by the table, folding the article in question; and her last-born, standing opposite her, gazing at her keenly from beneath his torn straw hat, said,

"Malviny's crosser'n a bear, and Kitty haint. She don't order a feller round. What are you steppin' on my foot for, mother?"

"Samuel Ross, do you go right out into the kitchen, and wash your face. I should be ashamed to come into the room where there is company with such a looking face." He did not move, and she continued, with a threatening glance at him, "Do you want me to have a reckoning with you?" Evidently he did not, for this question was potent; he left the room immediately. Mrs. Ross laid the bedquilt in the bed-room, saying, as she came back into the room,

"Malviny will be in, in a few minutes."

Again the young minister's eye wandered out of the open window.

"Isn't that your youngest daughter coming up through the meadow?"

"La, no! She haint my daughter; that is Kitty Ross, my husband's brother's girl. I took her though when she was an infant babe; brought her up on a bottle, and done for her as if she was my own."

"I have noticed her face in church," said he.

He did not say that her face in the family-pew reminded him of a mountain daisy, in a bed of hollyhocks. Neither did he find it necessary to tell what an inspiration she had been to him; that when some noble truth came warm from his own heart, the sudden light that would spring up in those shy, brown eyes, had shown him, that, though strangers, they were near kindred. And, if the whole two hundred of his congregation had been absent, and those appreciative eyes present, he would think he had a full house. These thoughts, which he did not speak, were still in his mind, when two doors opened simultaneously, and Malviny and Kitty entered. Malviny had, in her virgin bower, attired herself in her best, to do honor to the young minister, and she sailed in through the hall-door, just as Kitty entered through the kitchen-door, into the sit-

ting-room, with her basket of berries. She had on a print-dress and a sundown; but she had found a great bunch of wild-flowers and grasses, and her cheeks were as rosy as her strawberries, and her eyes fell shyly as they met the earnest look of admiration the young minister bent upon her, as he took the hand that was free in his own.

"Malviny, you go right into the parlor with Mr. Thurston. I have been waiting for you to come down; and Kitty, you go out into the kitchen-porch, and look after your strawberries. And Malviny," the mother called after them, as they passed through the hall, "you show the minister your feather-flowers, and the hair-wreath you have just done."

The young minister, as in duty bound, respectfully examined the flowers, in which the hair of the living and the dead of the Ross family blossomed again. The feathers, haply fallen from defunct ganders, were also faithfully commented upon, and then his attention seemed to be wandering.

"I noticed you had some beautiful flowers in your kitchen garden, as I passed this afternoon."

"Oh! they are some of Kitty's. Father gave her a little piece of ground in the garden; he don't make any difference between her and me, though she is only a girl we took, and is dependent on us for a home."

The color flushed up into Mr. Thurston's face, but any remark he might have wished to make was cut short by the entrance of Sammy, the terrible. He came in with an air of boldness, befitting Robert Kidd, "as he sailed, as he sailed." But a close observer could see that he was inwardly ill at ease, as if he expected his sojourn would be short in that land of promise. His presentiment was doomed to quick fulfillment, for scarcely had his little tow-breeches touched the chair-bottom, when Malviny asked him, with much sweetness,

"Sammy, won't you go out, and get me a drink of water?"

Sammy had no fear of man before his eyes, and he arose in his wrath.

"Yes; gim'me a drink of water! That is always the way! Gim'me a drink of water! an' then, when I go out after it, mother won't lem'me come in again! When a fellow is here, it makes you awful dry to have me jest step into the room."

"I shall tell mother of you, Samuel," said Malviny, with a red face.

"Yes! there it is again! gem'me into more trouble!"

"She will have a reckoning with you, Samuel." As we have said, Sammy had no fear of man;

but, before a "reckoning," even his iron courage faltered. Whatever this "reckoning" might be, he had evidently learned, from past experience, that the loss was sure to be upon his side of the account, and at the mention of it he departed, pausing, however, at the door to make up a face at his sister.

"I am so ashamed of him, Mr. Thurston; but we all humor him most to death, and it makes him act awful bad."

"Oh! I don't mention it," said the young minister, biting his lip. "But we were just speaking of your flowers, Miss Ross. I think I noticed a kind of rose that was exceedingly beautiful and rare, suppose we go out and see them."

Miss Ross was delighted, of course, to walk even so short a distance with the handsome young minister; and as she told her mother afterward, "as they walked through the front yard, the faces of the three Talmadge girls were so flattened against the window-panes opposite that their noses looked like the pictures of the Hottentots in her old Geography." And Malviny further remarked to her mother that "it was shameful the way those Talmadge girls was after the minister, and they Methodist girls, too, and he an Episcopal."

"Yes," cried Mrs. Ross, "I don't see how folks can make up their faces to act so bold; but it does seem as if some folks ha'nt got no pride."

Excepting a kitten, delivered, in its weakness, into the hands of children, for them to use at pleasure, I think there are few objects more truly deserving of sympathy, than a young unmarried minister. Then, if ever, must he be very circumspect; he must look neither to the right hand nor the left. His persecution is not like the old martyrs, but he will be stoned in the synagogue by soft glances, and honeyed smiles, and endearing words. He will be sawn asunder in the market-place and the seclusion of his own study, by curious old ladies, who will gather his past history and settle his future. He will not wander in sheep-skin and goat-skin, but in slippers manifold, embroidered with every known device.

If the young minister be cowardly, he is often constrained to gird up his loins and flee to the mountains. But the Rev. Floyd Thurston was not cowardly. From his earliest youth he was noted for his quiet self-possession. He always knew just what he wanted, and he usually obtained it in a straightforward manner. Like Sir Galahad,

"His strength was as the strength of ten,
Because his heart was pure."

To do him justice, he was a very pure-minded young man, earnestly devoted to his sacred calling; and although he was talented, rich, and

handsome, he was not vain; consequently, he passed unnoticed many things that would have affected a vainer man. I think Malviny had forgotten that the old kitchen-porch opened directly upon the garden, and was not very remote from it. But I think the young minister had not, for his first glance was in that direction, and there sat Kitty hulling her strawberries—and Kitty was laughing.

Down in the meadow that afternoon, Kitty had not been very gay, though she loved every flower and bird, and every little white wanderer of a cloud as well. When her cousin was impetuous, and her aunt cross, and she felt herself to be more than ever an alien and an intruder, as their words often made her feel, she loved to get away from it all out into the woods, into the fields; and dear Nature, gentlest of all consolers; how tenderly did she comfort this sweet little soul! It seemed as if it were such a large world after all, and the good God had a place in it for everything. Even the least little mite of a grass-spray looked up hopeful, and seemed to feel at ease; and the great, calm heavens overhead never twitted it of being so small and worthless after it had done so much for it, in the way of dew and sunshine.

Sometimes, I am afraid, little Kitty was wicked enough to wish in her heart that the "bottle she had been brought up on," and which her aunt so often set before her, had been broken, and her infant life with it. But this afternoon she was too busy to give way to sorrowful memories or forebodings, for her aunt had ordered her to pick five quarts.

She was willing to work faithfully for her aunt. The neighbors said, "she worked like a slave, and it was a shame!" But I don't think Kitty cherished any revengeful thoughts; she wanted to do her duty, and if it was a loveless duty, it was only the harder for her. She worked diligently, and had gotten her basket nearly full, when down in a corner of the rail-fence, in a clump of alders, she found a bird's-nest, full of little ones almost ready to fly away.

"Oh, you darlings!" she murmured, looking down into it with her soft, wistful eyes. "You happy darlings! that have got some one to love you! Old bird, you needn't stand up there so anxious. Do you think I would harm a feather on their little heads?"

Then she wondered if any one would ever care for her as that old constant bird did for her little ones. She meant really to care for her as Clive Newcome did for Ethel. She had just been reading "*The Newcomes*." She would ask for nothing else upon earth, she thought, if she could only

be loved like that. She didn't care if it never amounted to anything. Little Kitty did not think of a settlement and an establishment, but all her life her poor heart, her hungry, loving little heart, had been asking for bread, and got only a stone. How beautiful it would be, altogether too blessed for her, she thought, as she went up to the house through the blossomy clover, to have a pair of dark-gray eyes look upon her with loving tenderness. Somehow, lately, all her air-castles—and she was a great builder of them—had raised themselves up in a Gothic form, with a stained window for a background; and all her heroes had looked down upon her with gray, earnest eyes; they had all handsome, dreamy faces, and their hands were spread abroad in benediction. Strange attitude for bold crusaders and knights in armor—but so it was.

When her aunt had dismissed her so summarily from the room, little Kitty was not unhappy; on the contrary, I think she was never so happy in all her life—for had she not met just such a look as she dreamed of down in the meadow. The memory of that was enough to make her bliss; and the berries she was hulling so busily, might have re-ripened beneath the tender sunlight in the brown eyes. But when the young minister looked at her, we said Kitty was laughing, and it chanced in this wise: Sammy, rudely driven from the parlor, had, as he always did, taken his wounded spirit to Kitty; and such solace did he find in her society, that he had forgotten his grief. Yet, still smarting under the sense of the injury his sister had done him, he was in the corner of the porch, giving a theatrical representation of a scene to come off, when he was a wealthy householder, and Malviny a beggar at his gate. Kitty knew she ought not to laugh; but her sense of the humorous was very keen, and Sammy was a zealous, if not finished performer. His head was just stretched out, waving Malviny scornfully from his palace-door, when, suddenly he dropped his tragic air, and exclaimed, "By Hokey, there they be now!" and, by one of the master strokes for which he was famous, he tripped over the basket of berries, and, entangling his foot in the trailing clothes-line that depended from one corner of the porch, he fell headlong to the ground.

The young minister would have disgraced his sacred calling, had he stood coldly by and seen a fellow-being in distress. He released Sammy from his perilous position, wiped the tears with his own snowy handkerchief, and then insisted on helping Kitty pick up her berries.

"Oh, no!" said Malviny, who stood aloof, by

reason of her new muslin dress, which both she and her mother mistrusted "wouldn't wash." But Mr. Thurston insisted. They were the most tantalizing of berries, and, upon finding themselves free once more, had scampered into unheard-of places of concealment. But into their remote fastnesses, behind large, glossy plantain-leaves, and golden-disked dandelions, did the young minister follow them, as diligently as he had ever burrowed after a Greek root, and far more delightfully, I warrant. Once or twice, his white hand came in contact with Kitty's little brown pink-tipped fingers, and once her long, sweeping curls grazed his cheek; but he endured both these trials in a true Christian spirit of resignation; indeed, so disciplined was his mind, that I am certain, when she had thus smote him upon one cheek, he would willingly have turned the other also.

The acquaintance, thus begun, Mr. Thurston did not allow to cease; his visits to the farm house were frequent and lengthy. Mrs. Ross openly and friendly, Malviny, demurely, accepted them as tributes to her charms, both as a rich man's daughter, and as a maiden who was alike industrious and economical. So time ran along, till one evening Mr. Thurston walked home with Kitty from an evening meeting. That night, in the sacred retiracy of their bed-room, while on the hugo feather-bed, good uncle Phy slept the sleep of the just, Mrs. Ross lay awake in deep thought. Finally, she hunched her husband in the side, changing an incipient snore, into,

"What's wanted, mother?"

"I have been thinking, Pa," was the answer, "that Kitty would like to go away somewhere this summer, and mebby we had ought to let her go."

Kitty was beloved by her uncle, as well as by Sammy, the terrible, and the mother felt that she must be wary.

"You know she has worked pretty hard," she continued, "all the spring, and I spose folks will talk if we don't do well by her. And her aunt Huldy—she is her own aunt, if we never did any of us see her—she has been writing to her time and again for her to come and visit her; and she is well off, and getting pretty well along in years; and she might leave Kitty something. I don't know as we had ought to stand in her light."

"I thought you couldn't spare her, last summer, when her aunt wrote for her."

"Philander, you little know the feelings a woman has for a child she has brought up on a bottle: I am willing to spare Kitty, this summer."

"Well, well! you women folks must have it

your own way; you will, any way; only she hadn't better stay long."

In this philosophical frame of mind, uncle Phy turned himself to the wall, and resumed his nocturnal music, seemingly taking up the broken note just where it was rudely interrupted by his wife's elbow.

So it chanced that, the next Sabbath, the young minister missed the shy, brown eyes, that had been such a help and delight to him. That day he preached to empty seats, and the next afternoon he found it convenient to call at the farm-house. Malviny met him at the door, radiant and blooming; her mother also was in fine spirits; but they both seemed afflicted with a sudden loss of memory. They couldn't, either of them, for their life, recollect the name of the place where Kitty had gone. But it was a good ways off, and they didn't know but she had gone for good. She wasn't much help to them, and they thought mebby they shouldn't have her come back at all. Mrs. Ross added, however, with some show of sentiment, that "though Kitty was so hard to manage, and so different from Malviny, still, when a women had brought a child up on a bottle, and done for 'em like her own, she couldn't help missing 'em."

Mr. Thurston was not very sociable, Malviny thought, when her mother, as in duty bound, left them alone. He could not possibly stay to tea, and he was just drawing on his gloves, preparatory to leaving, when Mrs. Ross, who had in her loneliness wandered up stairs, rushed into the room with frightened eyes, and waving cap-strings. She held a paper in her hand, which she had found in Sammy's room, and then they both remembered that he had been missing since the early dinner. The paper, which the young minister took out of the mother's trembling hand, and read, was as follows: It was written seemingly with much effort, and each line commenced with a capital letter, like poetry.

"I am a going to run away
Where Kitty is I love her oh
Is sweet Kitty is I will
Nott stay where foaks are
Kross and will not give a
Feller 2 peaces of py
When he Are Starvin Hungry
So no moar at preasant
U need not look for me for
Deer parints I will not be took
Alive So no moar from yare Sun
Sammui

p s I Hoap Malviny wont
Be dry now when she has a Bo."

As they read, the grief-stricken parent recollect that he had been refused two pieces of pie at dinner. The premises were searched unsuccessfully, and as uncle Phy was absent, Mr. Thurston volunteered to walk to the village, only two miles distant, in search of the fugitive. About half'a mile from the village, he discovered Sam, who was resting from his fatigue on a stone-heap, but with his bundle suspended from a long pole, still upon his shoulders. This bundle, as after-search revealed, consisted of a flaming cravat, and a paper-collar of his father's, a box of percussion caps, a steel-trap, an empty powder-horn, a pair of thin, Sunday trousers, a jack-knife, six jell-tarts, and a generous slice of sponge-cake. He scornfully refused to return home, strictly affirming that to Riverdale he would go, to aunt Huldah's, to see Kitty.

"Riverdale? aunt Huldah Bliss?" The young minister's face was radiant. But by putting forth all his powers of persuasion, which so few could resist; he succeeded in bringing the young prodigal home, where, for that night at least, he found there was ple enough and to spare. Mrs. Ross and Malviny overwhelmed the young minister with gratitude, which he received with good-nature; in fact, he seemed to be in such a blissful state of mind, that nothing came amiss to him. But he could not stay to tea; his vacation was so near at hand, he was exceedingly busy.

His vacation! They didn't know he was to have one.

Yes; he was to have three month's vacation—the church needed repairs; it had been arranged at the last vestry-meeting.

After he went away, Mrs. Ross assured Malviny that when it made a certain person so happy to do another certain person a good turn, she thought that certain person had better be in a hurry for what might happen. Malviny blushed, shook her head playfully at her mother, and took herself to her patch-work, for she was now piecing up a sunflower bedquilt.

The third day after the hegira of the terrible, Kitty Ross looked up from her sewing, at the mild face opposite her, which beamed out from its lace ruffles, like the moon from fleecy clouds.

"I shall be just as glad to see him as if he were my own son," said the old lady, impressively, as she folded up her letter, took off her spectacles and wiped them, and looked up at her niece. Little Kitty was sitting in a rocking-chair, before the window, and aunt Huldah thought she looked like a picture, in her white-muslin dress, and her beautiful head resting against the carved mahogany of the old-fashioned chair-

back. There was a wonderfully pretty color in her face, too, as she asked, shyly,

"Why does he happen to come here visiting, aunty, when you are no relative of his?"

"His mother was the best friend I ever had in my life, and when she died, his father was most distracted. They lived next door to me then, and I took Floyd; he was nine years old, right here, and kept him a year. His father died, too, a year or two after that, and Floyd went away to school, and to college, and finally got to be a minister. But he has always considered this a sort of home, and has been here every little while ever since; and if he were my own son, he couldn't be more welcome, for a better boy never lived."

Aunt Huldah gave the letter a final fold, previous to its life-long seclusion in her bureau-drawer, and then exclaimed, triumphantly,

"How glad I am, Kitty, I made you take that sage-tea, last night. You looked dreadful pale when you first came here. Sage is an excellent herb. I havn't seen such a color in your cheeks, never; and your eyes shine just like stars."

Aunt Huldah's sage-tea was, indeed, marvelous in its effects, if that "excellent herb" were really the cause of the brown eye's lustre; for they were, indeed, like stars, and the cheeks—why, sure roses were pale in comparison to them.

So the Rev. Floyd Thurston thought, as he sat by her side in the vine-shadowed portico, through the long, sweet twilights, or wandered through the fields with her, the fields that "ran, dew-dabbled to the sea"—for aunt Huldah lived near the sea-shore—teaching her so many things. Why, he knew every thing, Kitty thought. Why, every bird's name, and all the lovely ferns and lichens and mosses, she had loved, without a proper introduction. Why, they were old friends to him: he could name them every one, and the rocks, shale, eocene, and pliocene, and what not. Why, he had only to glance at these solid mysteries, to be able to tell its name and age; and how he could talk about the wonder of their creation. How wonderfully wise he was! And what a marvel it was that he could care for her enough to take such pains to teach her, little, ignorant thing that she was! Thus Kitty thought in her sweet humility. But Floyd Thurston thought that the bright, eager eyes she raised to him, when some new truth dawned upon her; her quick sympathy as he read some choice bit out of Ruskin, Thoreau, or Hugh Miller, was the best reward he could possibly have. Sometimes he would read poetry to her, "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," "Genevieve," and "Maud," and the "Idylls of the King." Not always then did the

star-like eyes beam fully upon him. The shy eyelids would often droop over them like clouds of snow. He put a wonderful deal of soul into those poems, I can assure you. So, through those long, bright summer days, and early autumn, the young minister taught Kitty the sweetest lesson upon earth.

And in blissful unconsciousness, through these very days, aunt Ross, the schemer, rejoicing in her master-stroke, bought bright colored calicoes for Malviny, to cut into fantastic shapes, and at the same time taught her lessons of economy, befitting the chief lady of the parish.

But, as the last Sabbath in September drew near, the parish became like the troubled sea, which rests not day nor night. Signs had been seen, not in the heavens, but at the parsonage, at which curious heads were shaken. Carpets were visible out under the plum-trees; the curtains in the bay-window were known to be taken down and washed; and, upon good authority, more "groceries" had been purchased at the village-store than had ever gone into that house at one time. This might, it is true, betoken the return of the minister only. The motherly old lady in charge, who had been Mr. Thurston's nurse, was reticent. The best pumper in the neighborhood, (it is needless to say it was a female,) had plied her pump in vain—the well was too deep; no information could be gained. But it was well to be watchful, and it could not be denied that suspicion was abroad.

Miss Hathway, a maiden who had bewailed her virginity, forbade it for me to say how many years, called upon Mrs. Ross on Saturday afternoon, and "mistrusted the minister was going to bring home a wife."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mrs. Ross, "I guess I know which way his mind is set. Malviny, you go and bring out a breadth of your new rag-carpet, and show it to Miss Hathway. Haint that copperas-color splendid? Malviny colored it herself."

Miss Hathway, like the rest of the unmarried females of the parish, had seen visions, and dreamed dreams, in which, if an angel figured, it was not a female angel, but a young man with a long, white robe, like those in the sepulchre. She praised the carpet, but coldly. "She wasn't over partial to copperas-color, she preferred but'nut."

Within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the congregation in St. Jude's had not met at so early an hour; and the fans which so wildly fluttered in the air, were but faint symbols of the agitation that shook the breasts of their flutterers. But the sun, which never looked down on a lovelier day, hastened not his chariot. Neither did Mr. Thurston appear sooner than his wont. At precisely half past ten he walked in, and by his side—the fans sunk in the lips of the faint fanners—it could not be! and yet it was! Kitty Ross! Kitty Ross Thurston! for the tender pride and happiness of the young minister's face could not be mistaken.

The faces of Mrs. Ross and Malviny were tablets on which unutterable thoughts were traced. But for them fainting was impossible, for at the first view of the pretty, pretty face, looking out from its white draperies, Sammy, the terrible, rose in his seat, and whispered audibly to the stricken Malviny, who, divining his intent, grasped him firmly by the back of his little plaid pantaloons.

"Leg'go, Malviny! Lem'me go, I say! I will go to Kitty!"

"I'll Kitty you!" she whispered to him, in direful accents.

But this singular threat was powerless. He writhed and struggled, till his mother, like the ancient mariner, "held him with her eye," and assured him that a "reckoning" would inevitably be the result of another movement on his part.

That brought him to his seat, just as Kitty lifted her sweet eyes to her husband's face, and the service began.

LITTLE ALICE.: A PHYSICIAN'S STORY.

BY MARY W. JANVRIN.

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LITTLE ALICE.

A PHYSICIAN'S STORY.

BY MARY W. JANVRIN.

"PLEASE, doctor, come with me—quick!" said the trembling voice of an old man at my door, one wet, cold May night.

I turned from my window, whither I had been drawn, aroused from sleep by his loud, double rap at the street door—and hastily dressing, went down stairs, crossed the hall, slipped back the bolt, and joined him. It was a wild, stormy night, and cold, too, for the season—and the rain splashed down sullenly and unceasingly from the black starless sky upon the pavements; and as I emerged from the warmth of a comfortable home into the chilly, out-door atmosphere, I buttoned closely my overcoat and drew my mufflers up about my throat.

"Lead the way, sir," I said to the old man at my side.

On we went rapidly, through the driving rain beating full in our faces, my companion seeming to take no heed of the raging storm—though, as we suddenly turned a corner, coming directly under the glare of a street lamp, I noticed that his garments—the attire of an artisan of the humbler class—were miserably scanty and thin—that his tattered grey hair was dripping down his bent shoulders—and saw what I had not observed before, that his right arm hung withered and useless at his side. And over his white, thin face—and in the glances of which, every few moments, he cast upon me, as if to make sure I was hastening or close beside him, I read the story of some great grief, and saw there traces of want and hunger.

This was just such a haggard, hopeless face as I had seen hundreds of times among the poor of England—among the artizans and laboring classes—telling the same sad story, of want, penury, and sorrow.

And so, sadly musing, each busy with his own thoughts, we walked on—the silence broken only by the steady tramp of our feet, and the ceaseless patter of the rain upon the tiled roofs and narrow brick pavements.

We were turning an angle of a street, when, in a sudden lull of the storm, the old man said abruptly, "She can't stand it long, sir!—but I hope we shall get there before she drops off!"

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"Who?" I asked, involuntarily, giving utterance to the curiosity I had hitherto restrained.

"Who? Oh, didn't I tell you? I thought I did. It is little Alice, sir—our little Alice, who is dying—and has been calling for you to come all night—and all the week past," said the old man.

"And why did you not send for me sooner?" I asked.

"I did go—twice before to night—but they told me you had left town, and wouldn't be back till to-day. But I'm glad you're going now! Somehow, she talks about you all the time; and maybe the sight of you will do her good."

I recollect then. I had been to a far distant county, to bury a beloved sister, within a week, returning home only that day.

"How long has the child been ill?" I asked.

"Oh, sir, it is only eight days or thereabouts, since she came home one night from the factory, pale and weak, and when the bells rung again in the morning she tried to get up and go again to her work, but was too sick; only eight days since she gave up—but I've seen the look in her face all along—I knew it! But the little thing wouldn't give up sir!"

"You say she worked in a factory—in Mr. Sidney's?" I inquired.

"Aye," was the answer, in a hasty tone. "Aye, sir, for two years little Alice has led a slave's life in his spinning room, and that's what's killed her—working there to earn the bread we ate—her mother and I!"

"She is your child, then?" I queried.

"No! my grandchild. James died three years ago last winter—the consumption killed him—and left little Alice and her poor mother. It's a terrible thing, sir, to be poor!" he added, after moment's pause, "a terrible thing to be poor, and can't work! I wonder what God sent this upon me for"—looking down upon the useless, shrunken member by his side—"and let that child kill herself to support me?"

"If it hadn't been for this, I could have worked for 'em both—mother and child—and saved the poor dear lamb!"

"And how old is little Alice?" I asked.

The old man groaned. "Eight years—only an eight year old child—little better than a baby—taken from its mother's bosom to toil from bell-ringing to bell-ringing again in yonder cursed factories! No wonder, sir, the children die!—no wonder they are dropping off by scores—toiling like slaves, aye, worse than the black slaves over the water that the gentle folk pity so! Yet they have no eye, or heart, or pity, for their own slaves at home!"

"God help you! It is, indeed, a terrible thing to be poor!" I replied, involuntarily, respecting the man's grief too much to check his righteous bitterness of speech. "Yes, England has much to answer for—she has her slaves!"

"And it's all the rich men's fault!" he broke forth again. "They do it all! They send our children into their great smoking, stifling prison houses, making them work, work, until the din of the great iron wheels crushes the life out of their brains!—and all to keep their own with soft, white hands, and doll-baby faces in their splendid homes! The rich do this—they have a right because they have the power, and they have the power because they have the money! and so they grind down the poor, and kill the little babes! and this is 'Merrie England!' Aye, merry enough, I dare say, sir, to us poor folks, who bury our dead, and have no time to stand and weep over them!"

He ceased suddenly, his grey head dropping on his breast; but still his feet kept on their rapid way.

For a moment I was astonished at his vehemence; and yet, why should I have been? for the sudden revelation of this man's heart was nothing new to me. In the course of an extensive practice in one of England's largest manufacturing towns, and principally among the artizans and operatives in the factories—for, as God is my judge, I never turned a deaf ear to a poor man's call! in the course of such a practice, among an oppressed, hopeless people—familiar with the appearance of want and penury in a thousand forms—how could I expect to witness any new phase of character among them?

Many a time had I stood by miserable pallets in close, stifling rooms, amid the lowest forms of squalor and poverty—many a time had I stood by the cots of the lowly poor, who, amid all their destitution, had preserved the virtue of cleanliness—many a time ministering unto them to the last, had I closed their eyelids, and in imagination followed the released soul from its late prison-house up to the shadow of the Great White Throne, into the presence of Him in whose eyes there are neither rich or poor, nobles, or

slaves—and then, turning away, I had walked beside the haughty millionaire, Russel Sidney, through his busy factories—and looking upon the mute, wan faces bending over their tasks, watching the long, famine-stricken fingers plying the ceaseless shuttle, or "turning the great iron wheels round and round"—looking upon these operatives, too weary and hopeless to complain, and daily getting thinner and weaker—amid those scenes of oppression, I, too, groaned out in bitterness of spirit, even as had this weary old man at my side, "And this is free, merry England!"

But my thoughts came back to the old man and his errand.

"And little Alice has been asking for me, yes say! Does she know me?" I inquired.

"She has seen you often when you visited the factory. You remember her—don't you? She has soft, golden curls, and eyes blue as the skies that hang over the country meadows in summer time," said the old man.

But vainly I tried to call her to remembrance. Among the many little children whom I had seen in my rounds through the factory rooms, at whom I had stopped to pat upon the head, there were too many with meek blue eyes and golden curls, and, alas! pale, pinched faces, for me to single out the memory of this little one. And so, fruitlessly endeavoring to call up her form and face before my mental vision, I hastened to beside the old man, as he led me through a labyrinthine maze of streets and narrow alleys into the very heart of the city. At length we stopped.

"It is here, sir. Step carefully—the stairs are steep and narrow," said the old man, as he pushed open the door of a dilapidated old wooden house, and bade me enter. Up several flights of steep, rickety stairs, which creaked and rattled under our footsteps, I followed him, until we gained an upper landing, from whence he opened a door leading to a room beyond.

It was a low, damp attic chamber, containing but few articles of furniture of the poorest description—the rafters overhead blackened and unplastered—the rain trickling in through the broken roof—and the voice of the storm shrieking at the little window-pane like the moan of a dying fiend.

Upon the hearth smouldered a few dead ashes, from whence the fire had died out long before even as hope from the heart of that poor mother who knelt by the bedside of her dying child.

The light of a farthing candle, burning upon a little stand near the head of the bed at the farther corner of the apartment, but faintly illumined the gloom, only to reveal the other

desolation; but I could not fail to perceive the figure of a woman who rose from her half-kneeling, half-crouching posture by the bed-side as we entered, nor the tiny, attenuated child-form which started up from the pillows.

And a little, faint voice, sweet as the cry of a tiny, weak bird, said,

"Is it you, grandpa? and has he come?"

"Yes, little darling, and here is the kind doctor," said the old man, in a softened voice.

"Oh, I knew he would come! I knew it!" again cried that sweet, faint voice; and little Alice turned her full, blue eyes upon me.

The woman by the bed-side came feebly forward—a thin, weary-looking, consumptive woman—such an one as I had seen hundreds of times before among the poor: a pale, suffering widow, toiling all day at the weary loom, and then half the night over some coarse sewing, to eke out the money to provide food and shelter to keep soul and body together, and then, when strength failed utterly, sending forth her delicate little one to earn her mite in the noisy factory room.

This pale, sad woman came feebly forward; and curtesying with native grace, said, struggling meantime to crush down her tears and the great choking sobs which rose in her throat,

"Oh, good sir, you are very kind to come among us poor people—but my little one did want to see you so! and God will send you His reward!" and then, turning toward the bed, she tenderly stroked out, one by one, the long, golden curls that lay over the pillow, saying, "and now lie very still, Ally; the kind doctor has come."

I went to the bed-side and looked down into the child's eyes. And I knew then what thoughts were tugging at the mother's heart-strings—what inquiries hovered on her lips, even before the words broke forth,

"Oh, tell me, doctor, will she live? Can you save her for me?"

Heart sick, I turned away—heart sick and mute; for my practised eye saw all at one glance. There was no hope! Even then the film of death had begun to gather over the pupils of those large, blue eyes upturned to mine; even then life was ebbing surely from that tiny heart; and the little, slender fingers which had crept lovingly into my hand were growing cold. Life might linger for a few hours, or go out at any moment. She might lie thus till the grey dawn broke over the smoky city, or she might gently, dreamily lapse into the death sleep. But there was no hope!

And the mother must have read it all in my countenance, for she turned away, buried her

face in her hands with a quick, convulsive, sobbing cry, and dropped down on her knees. And the old man sat motionless in the distant corner among the shadows, whither he had retreated upon his entrance; and little Alice lay very quiet as her mother had bidden her, looking up into my face with a loving, tender smile.

"I am so glad you came!" she murmured, at length: "I knew you would come, some time, ever since you gave me the pretty flowers. See! I have kept them," and a soft light glorifies her face, and a radiant smile played about the little mouth, as she reached forth her transparent hand, pointing with one trembling finger to the little stand at the head of her cot.

"Give them to me—please!" she whispered.

I turned to the stand, and saw there, in a cup of water, a little bunch of faded wild flowers; and taking them thence, I placed them in her outstretched fingers.

And then gazing upon those few wild flowers, looking down into her blue eyes, and mechanically threading my fingers through the curls which swept the pillow like threads spun from pure gold—then it all flashed over me in an instant, and I remembered "little Alice."

I remembered how I had seen her often in the stifled factory room, flitting to and fro among the great wheels of the spinners—to and fro, among the clatter and Babel-noise of the turning machinery, like a child-angel as she was. I had paused more than once to stroke those golden curls; and now it came fresh to memory again—how, one day, scarce two weeks ago—in walking past the spinning-frame where she stood at work, holding a bunch of wild flowers in my hand—a few large English violets, sprigs of sweet thyme, and blades of blue-eyed grass, which I had plucked that morning during a ride into the country—I marked the eager, childish delight sparkling in her eyes as she saw the flowers, and gave them to her with a kind word, and then passed onward. And I had straightway forgotten the incident, until those withered, faded blossoms, treasured up to gaze upon in her death hour, recalled it. That little cluster of wayside flowers had made her so happy! I was much affected.

"I am sorry to find you so sick! I remember you now, little Alice," I said, at length.

She looked up and smiled faintly, still caressing my hand.

"And you have kept my flowers ever since?" I asked. "And have you been sick ever since, too?"

"Almost," she whispered. "My head kept aching so, and the great wheels went round and

round and made me dizzy—and one night when I came home, my cheeks were so red and hot that mamma cried and put me to bed; and then when morning came, and the great bell rung, and I wanted to get up and go to the factory she wouldn't let me, but said I must lay very still. And then I did lay still—so very still that a little mouse got up on the stand right beside the pretty flowers you gave me, and I wasn't frightened a bit, but laid and looked at him—but, somehow, my head wouldn't stop aching, and then I woke up grandpa and wanted him to go for you to come and get me well—for I knew you was the doctor."

"Don't you think you can get me well?" she asked, after a little pause, gazing up into my face. "Can't I be got strong enough to go away from this noisy place into the pleasant country, where it is so cool and still, and the flowers grow? Maybe you'll take me there in your nice carriage some day, when it don't rain so hard, won't you? I don't mind asking you, for you were so good, and gave me the dear, pretty flowers!" And again those trusting, childish eyes were upturned to mine.

I could not answer for the rushing tears. I had been less than man had I not cried then. I tell you, the physician, whether he goes among high or low, sees many pitiful, sad, heart-breaking scenes in his life. I had seen many such—but never, *never* any like this! The mother sobbed aloud; and the grandfather, poor, stricken old man! moaned sadly.

I stood there silent; and little Alice must have read my thoughts, for she said in a few moments almost cheerfully,

"Well, you don't speak, and I see how it is. I can't ever get well—and you're sorry to tell me so. But it won't make me feel bad—only mamma and grandpapa, they'll miss me so! If God makes me die and go to heaven, I want to. Mamma says all the little children go there; don't they?"

"Yes, yes," I murmured—"little children all go there—'of such are the kingdom of heaven,' it is written."

"That's just what she read out of grandpapa's big Bible the other night, when my head ached and I cried so—and it made me feel good, and stopped the naughty pain."

"Does your head ache now?" I asked, to direct the conversation into another channel, for it was getting intensely painful to the poor overwrought mother.

"Oh, no, it's all gone now," she replied, brightening. "And I don't think it'll come back any more, either—not if I die and go to

heaven, it won't—for mamma said how nobody was ever sick there."

Then relapsing into quiet, for a little time silence rested on that room, broken only by the beating of the wind and rain against the window pane. Little Alice lay looking at the flowers she held—then all at once asked, eagerly,

"Will there be flowers in heaven, mamma?"
"Yes, dear," sobbed the mother.

"Oh, that will be beautiful!" she cried, joyfully. "And it will be good to die and go there. I dreamed all about it last night—though I didn't tell anybody till now, how there were pretty flowers, and little singing birds—such beautiful birds, too, as never come to this great smoky town—and I saw lots of children—and little Katy Deane, who died last year, was there—and they all came and got me, and led me up to papa, for he was there too, dear mamma—and then he kissed me, and told me to go and play, and then the little children took hold of my hands, and we all ran down into the green meadows together. Oh, it was so cool there, and soft and still! The great bells didn't ring once to scare away the birds. I don't believe they have factories there, up in heaven. God won't let them have them, to shut up the little children in, will He, mamma?"

The mother could not speak; but the old man came forth from the corner where he had sat, moaning, and rocking his body to and fro, and groped toward the bed.

"No, darling, no! thank God for that! No work there—no rich to grind down the poor—but cool, green meadows and gardens for the children to play in—and when they're tired, Jesus takes them up in his arms like little lambs, and carries them!" And he fondly stroked out her curls, and let his trembling old hand go wandering all over her sunken features.

"Then it will be good to die, grandpapa," she said, smiling sweetly. "The bells won't wake me up in the morning when I am tired—oh, so tired! It will be good to die and go to heaven, even if I have to go all the way alone; but papa 'll be there, and by-and-bye mamma and you, and the good doctor here, will all come too—won't you, grandpapa?"

"I hope so, darling! Everybody knows God takes little children and makes angels of 'em—but I'm old and wicked, and p'rhaps after all I shan't get there!" And the old man sank down upon his knees, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, hush, grandpapa! It makes me feel bad to hear you talk so! God loves everybody, if they only love Him! Don't you know, mamma read that, too, in your big Bible the other night?" whispered little Alice.

By-and-by the sobs died away, and the old man rose and stood silent at the bedside; and the little one lay still upon the pillows. But a great change had suddenly passed over her waxen face; and I think he must have seen it, too, for again he broke forth into moaning sobs, and sank upon his feeble knees beside the mother, who was silently praying, and quelling her sobs, that she might not impede her darling's flight to heaven.

The dying child lay very still for a few minutes, her eyelids fluttering open, then wearily closing: while I bent over her, holding my watch in one hand, and with the fingers of the other on her wrist counting the faint strokes of her feeble pulse; and all the time the death-angel, Azrael, was hovering over that low pallet, unfurling his wings, and brightening and glorifying every feature of her transparent face with his touch.

The flowers were still grasped tightly in her little right hand, beneath the nails of whose slender fingers the blood was settling in livid streaks darker and bluer than the hue of the violets.

Presently she unclosed her eyes, and holding up the blossoms, murmured brokenly; and, knowing that, even then, life was fluttering on her white lips, I stooped low to catch the words.

Looking intently upon the flowers, she whispered gaspingly and slow, "Violets! violets!" then, while a sudden light broke over her face, and in the glimpse of heaven which the angels surely brought her then, she murmured,

"There! don't you see them—the pretty flowers? All the little children are picking them—and Katy, too, she wants me, let me go!" and she suddenly withdrew her hand from mine—"let me go! don't hold me! They want me in heaven!"

One sudden spring from the pillow; one little struggle; one feeble flutter of the tiny heart; one opening and shutting of the tiny fingers, letting the violets fall all over the pallet; and it was over!

They had wanted little Alice in heaven, and she had gone!

She was no more in that miserable attic chamber, only a clay cold, waxen body, exquisite in its white, statuesque, perfect childish beauty as the sculptured marble—only the body, for the spirit was in the Father's bosom.

The mother sprang up.

"Thank God it is over! No more work—no more hunger—no more suffering, for she is with Jesus!" Then the great tide-waves of maternal love, stronger than life or death, swelled up from her heart to her eyes; and with a bitter wail and a gush of tears, she sunk down upon the bed beside her dead child.

"Aye, daughter, I suppose it is well to thank God that she has passed beyond suffering and want. I thanked Him for that when James died; but it does seem bitter hard that the little ones must go first—and an old, withered, useless being like me be left to cumber the ground! Yes, it is hard! Little Alice has died before her time!" And with a groan of anguish, the old man shrunk away into his dark corner again.

And when the next day—a fair May day as ever smiled upon the earth—I looked down into the little grave they had dug for her in the wet kirk-yard sod—when I looked abroad over the great smoky city, where the tall chimnies loomed up and pierced the sky—I could but say,

"And in yonder factories, amid the stifling air and the ceaseless din of turning iron wheels, are still toiling, toiling, scores of pale, wan, hunger-stricken little children, too many of whom will, alas! like little Alice, die before their time!"

And yet for her it was well! Quietly and sweetly she sleepeth now; we would not have it otherwise—for

"If you listen by that grave in sun or shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries!
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know
her,

For the smile has time for growing in her eyes!"